

ESCAPE FROM THE RAT RACE

The Second book in the

North to Alaska

Series

by Fleataxi

Chapter 1 - A new beginning

Roy was back in his cabin without Oliver the Wolf, who met up with a female wolf he named Francine, who was now pregnant with their first litter. Oliver and Francine had moved into a cave about 2 miles North of Roy's Cabin. While Oliver continued to visit, Francine was heavy with pups, and didn't want to travel any more than she had to.

He had just left the bush pilot at the lake, and was hiking back to his cabin. All alone for the first time in 6 months, he experienced feelings of loneliness, and the stark sense of being the only human for more than 100 miles. At the same time, He realized that Oliver was where he belonged, and human contact is just a radio call away. As Roy reached his cabin, he noticed something that wasn't there before. When he got closer, he could see it was a big stainless steel revolver, then he picked it up, and realized it was a Colt Anaconda .44 Magnum revolver with what appeared to be about a 6" barrel. He opened the cylinder crane, and there were 6 cartridges already loaded, and a box of 50 rounds next to it. He was seriously puzzled, but figured the Pilot didn't leave it by mistake since there was a box of shells next to it. He opened the box of shells, and examined one of the rounds. It was a box of Jacketed Hollow Point rounds, just the ammo he needed to take down a Bear. He picked up the gun and ammo, and set them inside the cabin on the table. He unpacked one of the big tarps, and covered the boxes with a tarp for the night, since he didn't have enough time to unpack all of it. He decided to bring the radio and the hand crank generator inside, and he set it up following the instructions that were included. When He had everything including the antenna hooked up, he tuned to the frequency the pilot told him to, turned on the radio, and keyed the mike. "Roy Williams on 460.650Mhz for a Radio Check, How do you copy?"

He released the mike, and a second later, came the reply "Roy, we read you 5x5, loud and clear. Do you have any traffic?"

He thought about that for a minute, then said "What frequency do I need to use to talk to the Mayor, over?"

A few seconds later, the monitor replied, "The Mayor is on 462.525, go ahead and call him. By the way, if you want someone to talk to you, have them call you on 465.645, OK?"

He Rogered the last transmission, and switched to 462.525 MHz, then keyed the mike, “Mayor, you got your ears on?”

The mayor replied almost immediately, “Affirmative, Read you 5x5, who is this?”

He replied, “It’s Roy Williams out by the HelpmeJacks.”

The Mayor asked Roy how things were doing, and if he could do anything for him.

He explained what had happened with the Colt Anaconda, and asked if he could talk to the pilot. The mayor said he just left to fly home, but left him a message to tell Roy that the pistol was Ron’s and he thought Roy should have it since he took good care of his partner, and made sure the family knew what had happened. Then he told Roy the bush pilot was making another trip up there 4 days from now on his weekly freight run, and asked Roy if he needed anything. He said he’d get back to him at 0800 tomorrow. The mayor rogered that, and signed off.

He looked around the cabin, realized he was way short on room to store all this stuff, then went outside. One side of the cabin was way too close to the trees and outhouse, but the other side had plenty of room for another room to store stuff in, besides, he needed a spot for the cast iron stove he bought to cook on, and keep the place warm. He thought he would build an 8x8 room onto the cabin, and cut a hole in the wall for a door. After he checked out the cabin, he took a walk to check on his building materials, and 50 yards away was a large stand of trees the old trapper had probably used to build the first cabin. He had more than enough wood to build an 8x8 room addition to his cabin. He thought about all the tools he’d need to build the cabin, then thought it would go a lot faster if he could use some modern tools, like a gasoline powered chainsaw and some other stuff like a roll of heavy roofing paper and some roofing nails to attach it to the rafters. He felt another shed roof like the cabin had would work best, and he would slope it from the existing cabin straight away to make the wall farthest away from the door the lowest. He made a list of stuff he needed and set it next to the radio. Then he set an alarm for 0745 so that he’d remember to call the mayor. Since it was getting dark, Roy decided to call it an evening, and closed the cabin door, ate some jerky, read from his Bible, and went to sleep when he got sleepy an hour later.

Roy’s alarm went off at 0745, He got dressed quickly, warmed up the radio, and started transmitting at 0800 sharp on 462.525 “Roy calling the Mayor”

The mayor came back, “Go ahead Roy”

He keyed the mike, read his list to the mayor, and asked if they could ship it on the next flight.

The mayor told Roy that he had most of that stuff in stock, and he could get the rest of it by the time the bush pilot was ready to fly. He said OK, and asked the Mayor to bill his account, and send him a receipt so he could keep track. He ordered a large chainsaw and all the safety gear

plus a planking attachment, 20 gallons of gasoline and several quarts of oil for the chainsaw, a bunch of lag bolts and washers, a roll of heavy duty roofing paper, a box of roofing nails and a roofing hammer. He planned to use the chainsaw to cut down all the trees he'd need to build his extra room, and cut down his firewood for this year, then use the bow saw to cut the wood into usable lengths. He wanted to be ready to go when the tools showed up, so he assembled the wheeled cart and wheeled dolly he had ordered. The cart was for hauling carcasses and other stuff, the dolly was for transporting logs, etc. He built a harness out of scraps of hide to help him pull the cart, since he didn't want to push it. The dolly was much simpler, and allowed Roy to haul a log by setting the low slung dolly wheels so the log balanced. Since he was building an 8x8 foot room, He decided to cut all the logs into 10-ft lengths to allow for the thickness of the logs, and enough room to notch the logs so they would stack. Some of the trees he'd picked were 50-60 feet tall, and would make 5 or 6 logs for his building. Next, he examined the ground where he was going to build, and using the shovel and the pickaxe, removed all the large rocks and smoothed the ground as best as possible. He took shovels of sand, and spread it around where the bottom course of logs was going, so the logs would rest on sand, and make it as level as possible.

Next, while he still had the shovel, he thought about his garden, then thought better of it since he needed to locate it closer to the lake so he wouldn't need to pipe water so far. He hiked toward the lake, and he found a perfect spot about 100 feet away from the lake. Just to be sure, Roy took his shovel and started digging. The soil was rich and loamy, with a good mix of clay and sand to make it drain well. He smacked himself on the forehead, since he forgot the chicken wire to keep the 4-legged invaders out of his garden. He walked back to the cabin, got on the radio, and asked the Mayor if he had any chicken wire handy. The Mayor said the store in town had a lot of it, and told Roy he'd add a roll to the shipment. He asked the Mayor if he could call a gunsmith friend of his, and order a custom shoulder holster for his 4 inch Colt Anaconda, and the 22/45 with the Colt under his left armpit set for cross-draw, and the 22/45 under his right arm for left hand cross-draw with the double mag holder underneath. The mayor told Roy he'd get back to him, and He thanked him. The Mayor said, "Don't thank me until you get the bill." He laughed at that, then thought - "who cares, I can afford it."

Roy assembled the solar powered water pump setup he bought, which included a 12vdc Shurflo RV water pump, a couple of solar panels and a small 12vdc battery in a wooden box with a SPST switch between the battery and the pump. He installed the switch on the outside of the box that would switch the pump on and off. He had about 200 feet of 1/2" PVC pipe in a box, and a bag of connectors, a can of PVC Pipe cement. He was going to pipe the water up from the lake, and have it fill ditches to water the plants, so he had to be careful that the ground sloped away from the outfall point of his water distribution system, He was going to use an open manifold to feed all the ditches at once, instead of messing with a bunch of valves and stuff. He figured it would take about an hour per day to water the garden he planned. He remembered last winter, and he wanted to make sure he had something besides Jerky and pemmican to eat.

The only thing he couldn't get to grow up here was corn and tomatoes. Corn took too long, and tomatoes required too many warm days. He even found a sandy spot that might work for potatoes - he'd have to ask the Mayor to check for him. He remembered seeing a show about the monster veggies they could grow in Alaska. He didn't need King Kong sized cabbage, he just wanted a good eating vegetable. Later in the year, he would have the plane ship some canning jars and a canner to him so he could can stuff for the winter. Since it was getting dark, he walked back into the cabin and closed the door. He ate a piece of jerky from his dwindling supply, but he had food to eat, so he wasn't worried. He wished Oliver was there, since Oliver wasn't a picky eater. Some of this stuff was starting to taste pretty bad. He thought about that for a minute, and realized that he had eaten it all winter, and it didn't taste bad, but coming back from Civilization, where everything was well-seasoned, his raw jerky left a lot to be desired. Roy thought that next time he ate jerky, it was going to be seasoned, even if it meant putting it in the Dutch oven with some water and veggies to cook. As it grew dark, He got ready for bed, and sacked out.

Chapter 2 - Getting Ready for Building

The next morning, Roy drank some tea and ate some jerky, then he go to work - he only had 1 day until the plane arrived with all the stuff he'd need to build a "room addition" to his cabin. He took the large cart and a shovel to the water's edge to dig clay for chinking. He filled a trash bag with clay, then hauled it back to the cabin. Man, it was a lot easier with wheels. He went back for a second trip, then gathered all the loose debris he could find, mixed it into the clay, then decided to check his snares. Since he already had his 22/45 and his fanny pack, all he had to do was drop the shovel and the cart, then hike over to the first snare in his line. While the pickings were slim, there were enough rabbits in the snares to keep him fed for a couple of days. He skinned and gutted the rabbits back at the cabin, and out of habit whistled for Oliver. He walked outside the cabin, whistled again, and Oliver came trotting out of the forest, looking like the "Big Bad Wolf". He set the pile of guts down in front of him, and Oliver walked up and started eating. When he was through, he looked up at Roy, like saying, "Thanks for the grub, sorry about eating and running, but I've got to get back home." He reached out to pet Oliver, and Oliver sat there for a minute while Roy scratched behind his ears, then as soon as he stopped, Oliver stood up and trotted off back into the woods. He didn't know what to think, except that Oliver was getting more and more wild each day. He walked back into the cabin.

He was thinking about how to get those logs on top of each other. He had ordered a chain hoist, but he needed to build a portable A-frame to lift the logs. It needed to be at least 3 feet higher than the highest wall to allow for the length of the chain hoist. He thought he should use smaller logs up top to make things easier. He could use the biggest logs on the bottom, and the skinniest at the top. Even a difference of 4 inches in diameter could save him hundreds of pounds lifting those logs into place. He also needed to fix the logs into place. He ordered some ½" rebar, a 2 foot by ½" drill bit for his bit and brace to drill holes into the bottom log to anchor it to the ground and pilot holes for the ¾" lag bolts to support the head frame of the door and bolt the existing cabin wall to the new room. After he laid the first course of logs, he was going to drill 2 holes through the log, and pound a couple of 3 ft pieces of rebar through the log, and drive them one foot into the ground. That plus notching the ends of the logs would make that end very strong. It was going to be a lot of work, but it would be the sturdiest cabin in Alaska.

He walked into the cabin, and walked over to the foot of the bed to measure the distance from the foot of the bed to the edge of the wall. The foot of the bed was approximately 5 feet from the wall, and a 3 foot wide door would only leave 2 feet on the end of the wall. The bed was too heavy to move, so Roy figured he'd have to make the headers for the door much stronger than he had planned. He could easily use 4 inch verticals and an 8 inch thick beam overhead. He would hang a hide in the doorway to hold the heat in the main room and cut down on drafts.

When he was finished, Roy buckled on his fanny pack and his shoulder holster, grabbed his water containers and his fishing kit, and walked to the lake. He filled his water containers, set

them down, and walked North to his favorite fishing spot. He sat down and for the first time was able to cast over 100 feet out into the lake. He let the bait settle, then started retrieving it. He didn't make it 10 feet when something hit his lure like a freight train, and took off like a shot. He quickly set the hook just to make sure it was set, and cranked up the drag on his spincasting reel. Soon, He was able to reel in some line, then he started reeling in steadily as the fish tired. The fish tried to run a couple of times, but Roy was using 10/50 Spyderwire on the reel, and there was no getting away. He continued reeling in, until the fish was almost beached. He didn't recognize it, but it looked like a freshwater barracuda. He decided that discretion was the better part of valor and beached the fish the rest of the way, then chopped off its head with his Bowie knife. Picking up the fish by the tail, it weighed a good 20-30 pounds.

Roy hadn't had fried fish in a while, and he had all the fixings, so he quickly gutted the fish, walked down to the water containers, and carried the whole mess back home. He filleted the fish, and cut the fillets into sections, then got out some flour and lard to fry the fish in. As the lard was melting over the fire, He dredged the fish in the flour, and when the lard was smoking hot, added it to the skillet. He grabbed his set of newly purchased Supertongs that some smart person designed for use in barbeques, but would work just as well over an open fire. A couple of minutes later, He turned the fish over, waited about 5 minutes, then turned the now golden brown fried fish out onto a plate. He added salt and pepper to the fish, and ate it with a knife and fork. He was feeling Civilized for once, and said grace just before he dug in. He thought Oliver was really missing out. He was probably eating some poor squirrel or rabbit he caught near his den, and giving Francine the bulk of it since she was near giving birth. He hoped they were OK, and figured he'd better stay away from their den, since Francine wasn't as domesticated as Oliver was, and might object to someone near her cave and her pups. Maybe after they had grown a bit, Oliver would bring them by to show them off. When He finished eating, he cleaned and dried his plates, and set the skillet off to the side of the hearth to let the lard cool so he could re-use it later. He read his Bible for a while then went to bed.

Chapter 3 - Roy builds a Crane

The next morning, after Roy ate breakfast, he started designing an A-frame crane to lift and move the heavy logs. He wanted to be able to swing loads after he had lifted them so he could place the upper logs on top of each other. He looked for some suitable trees for the boom and the A-frame. He spotted a large tall tree that would work well as the boom, and a couple of really thick trees that would do for the A-frame. He was going to use the dolly wheels to make the crane pivot, so he couldn't make it right now, but he could drop the trees, de-limb them and get them ready so when he had all the logs cut to size, he'd be ready to lift them into place. He took the tarp off the stack of boxes, located the large axe that he just got, and walked over to the trees he wanted for the A-frame gantry crane, and started chopping them down. With a loud crack, the first one fell, and then the other two followed about an hour or so later. He sheathed the big axe, switched it for the smaller axe to de-limb the trees since it was easier to control. When He had the first tree de-limbed, and the branches and leaves cleared away, he walked over to the cabin, set down the axe, grabbed the two-dolly set, and carried it to the trees. He set it next to the biggest tree, and using a large branch as a lever, rolled the big tree into the cradles. He connected the two cradles so they couldn't come apart if he hit a rock, attached a choker chain and the harness to the front of the log, slipped his shoulders into the harness, and pulled the log over to the cabin.

Roy dragged it near where he wanted to build the A-frame so he wouldn't have to move it much more, then flipped the log off the dollies, and carried the dollies back over to the other two logs. By the end of the afternoon, he had all three logs where he wanted them. Now all he needed was the chainsaw to cut down all the trees he needed to build the room addition. Since the plane was coming tomorrow, and He was out of projects, he decided to spend the rest of the day fishing. He repacked all the stuff under the tarps, and covered everything up, then he went into the cabin, put on his shoulder holster and fanny pack, grabbed his fishing pole and mini tackle box, and headed for the lake. When he got there, the first thing he did was take a long drink, since he was parched. When he had drank his fill, he picked up his fishing pole, and walked north to his favorite fishing hole, baited the hook, and cast out into the lake. Unlike yesterday, Roy didn't get a strike 5 seconds after he put the line in the water, so he sat down to wait. After about 5 minutes, He started reeling in the lure, and that's when he got a strike. It wasn't as big as the last fish he caught, but it felt big enough. He kept the pressure on, and pretty soon the fish tired, and He was able to reel him in. It looked like another pike, but much smaller than the last one, maybe 10-20 pounds. Since he didn't have any safe way to unhook it, He decapitated the fish when he had it almost on the beach, then took the hook out with his Gerber Multitool after the fish was good and dead. He quickly gutted the fish, and figured it would be enough for dinner, and he decided that fried fish wouldn't be too bad two nights in a row, so he picked up the fish by the tail, and carried it back to the cabin. He got out the flour, pepper and salt then he filleted the fish and cut the fish into large pieces. He put the pan on the fire to get hot, and added the lard he'd used last night, then when the lard was hot, he breaded the fish, and set it in the hot lard to fry. After a couple of minutes, He turned the fish over, waited a few more

minutes, and turned it again, then put it on a plate, and seasoned it with Salt and Pepper. When he sat down to eat, Roy made sure he said grace, because he was definitely thankful. While he missed Oliver, Roy liked his creature comforts, and good food was something he really enjoyed, even if he had to eat by himself. When he finished eating, He cleaned off his plate, and set the skillet off to one side to cool so he could re-use the lard.

After dinner, Roy decided to call the mayor and make sure the plane was coming tomorrow. Roy turned on the radio, set it to 462.525 MHz, and keyed the mike “Roy calling the Mayor, over”

After a minute, the mayor responded “Roy, what do you need? Over”

He asked the mayor if the plane with his stuff was coming tomorrow, and the mayor said it should be there a couple of hours after morning. He thanked the mayor and signed off. Instead of walking away, Roy remembered he needed to recharge the battery for the radio, so he got out the hand crank generator, connected it to the battery, set it on the table, and started cranking for about 5 minutes. He thought that should be enough, and unclipped the generator’s leads from the battery, and put the generator back up. He picked up his Bible and started reading again. Since this new Bible had the Old Testament, he decided to start in Psalms. Roy always found great comfort reading Psalms, like David understood what he was going through.

He started at Psalm 1: “Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night.

3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

4 The ungodly are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind drives away.

5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

6 For the LORD knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the ungodly shall perish.

He read this with a mixture of sadness and relief. He felt sad for his sons, since they were walking with the ungodly, and trapped by their possessions. Roy wanted so desperately to talk to them and explain things to them, but mainly to apologize. He felt relief because since he had started walking with the Lord, his life had totally changed, he found contentment without all the possessions - “funny”, he thought, “We call them possessions, yet they end up possessing us.” He sat and thought about that for a while, then as he got tired, closed his Bible and went to sleep.

The next morning, Roy awoke to the sounds of a plane. “Yikes, I’ve overslept.” He said to himself, and quickly dressed to meet the plane. The plane landed on his lake, and taxied within 50 feet of the cabin. The Pilot got out, Roy shook his hand and thanked him for the gun. The pilot told Roy that Ron always used that gun when he was guiding, and he thought it was

strange that Ron left it home that day. Roy explained that Ron had told him to carry a .44 Magnum just like that one, so maybe Ron thought he didn't need it. With that, the pilot, who introduced himself as Jim, handed Roy the manifest for this trip. All the stuff he wanted was on it, and a couple of items he didn't expect, which the Mayor had noted next to them N/C for No Charge. He asked Jim about that, and Jim told him that sometimes the Mayor just threw stuff in he thought you could use, as long as it was relatively inexpensive, and in this case, it was a case of Orange Marmalade, and Roy thought it would go great with homemade biscuits as soon as he got the cast iron stove installed.

He helped Jim unload the plane, since he had to get back to base and reload for the next trip - It seemed Roy ordered so much stuff that Jim had to make a special trip. The rebar and other stuff were lashed to the pontoons to save space, and Roy noticed that Jim had split the load between the two pontoons to keep the plane balanced. Jim also had a small present for Roy, a pint of Bushmills Irish Whiskey that Ron had in his office that was unopened. Jim didn't drink, and didn't want to waste it, so he brought it along. He thought that was awfully kind of Jim, and told him he would think of him and Ron when he made Irish Coffee during the cold winter months. Jim handed Roy the chainsaw in its case, unloaded the gasoline and the other supplies, and as they unloaded them, Roy checked them off the manifest. By now the pile at his door was twice as big as before. He really needed the extra space. Maybe he should make the extra room 10 x 10? He had to think about that, since it meant cutting the logs to 12 feet instead of 10 ft. Jim told Roy he needed to get going, and Roy checked the manifest, and everything he had ordered was on it except the shoulder holster. He figured it would take a couple of weeks to get that. He thanked Jim, and told him he'd got everything, and it was OK to go. Jim got into the plane, and as Roy walked back to his cabin, Jim started his plane, turned and taxied back to the water. He ran to the downwind end of the lake, turned into the wind, set the flaps, and gunned the engine. The now much lighter plane seemed to leap into the air, and in minutes, he was out of sight.

Chapter 4 - Christmas comes Early to Alaska

When Roy returned to the cabin, he realized he had a lot of unpacking and work ahead of him. First, he got all the fragile stuff into the cabin, and under the bed, next he moved all the flammable stuff at least 50 feet away from the cabin for now. He decided he had to build his room addition before he did anything else, except fish and check his snares when he needed food. The sooner he could get the room up and a roof over it, the better.

He took his manifest and the chainsaw in its case into the cabin, and lit a candle to read by. Roy was amazed by all the stuff he bought, and how much money he had left. The bush pilot had charged him less than 100 dollars for the delivery of over 500 pounds of stuff. When he set the manifest down, Roy opened the case for the chainsaw, and started reading the documentation Stihl enclosed with the chainsaw. He was happy that the plank attachment was included in the case, so he could make planks for the floor. He walked outside to pick up the safety gear he had ordered including a jacket and pants, boots, gloves, and leg/shoe protectors. He also got a hardhat and flip-down visor made of impact-resistant polycarbonate with the attached hearing protectors. He had used chainsaws before, and didn't want to take any unnecessary chances. He had ordered a professional grade Stihl chainsaw with a 30-inch bar and a real aggressive chain since he was cutting mostly softwoods, and didn't want any kickbacks or binds. The whole setup only weighed 15 pounds.

Next Roy picked up the manual for the plank making attachment, and read it carefully. He was going to need it later to cut floorboards for the new room. When he finished reading all the paperwork, he went over the assembly and installation instructions again, and assembled the saw as he was reading them. He noticed the instructions were so full of warnings and disclaimers that it amazed him people would even use a chainsaw after reading them, then remembered that the "city slickers" as he now referred to them, would sue at the drop of a hat, and the company's lawyers were just protecting them as best as they could. He got the chainsaw assembled without it jumping up and biting him, so he assumed it was OK to proceed. He picked up the chainsaw, and put on all his safety gear, then carried the chain saw outside to where he stashed all the gasoline and oil, and filled the chainsaw up to the manufacturer's highly verbose instructions.

Roy walked over to the trees he needed to fell, set the saw down and carefully examined the trees to see which way they were growing, and the easiest and safest direction to fell them. Once he had the pattern figured out, he cleared the area of all loose brush and debris he might trip over if he had to get away from the tree in a hurry, then pulled on his gloves and hardhat, and flipped the visor down. Carefully grabbing the grab bar and dead man, he primed the carb, and pulled the starting rope. After a couple of pulls, the chainsaw roared into life. He let it idle for a while like the manual said, then blipped the throttle to make sure the chain was running smoothly and looked oiled, then released the dead man, which applied the chain brake, lifted the chainsaw to the tree, and started his wedge cut so the tree would drop where he wanted it, then

made the undercut, and the wedge fell out. He applied the chain brake, walked around the other side of the tree, and when he was in a good position with stable footing, revved the motor, released the chain brake, and cut through the trunk from the other side, meeting up with the wedge cut, and quickly backed the saw out of the cut as the tree toppled and fell right where he wanted it to. He thought to himself, "Man this beats chopping trees." and engaged the chain brake, then walked over to the next tree. He dropped 6 large trees in quick succession until the drop area got too crowded for safety. He stopped the chainsaw, and lifted his visor to wipe off his face.

He decided to do the bulk of the de-limbing with the chainsaw, and made extra sure he wasn't cutting anywhere near himself, then fired up the chainsaw and removed the main branches from the tree, leaving the thin little branches at the top alone for now. When Roy finished the bulk of the de-limbing, he worked an 8 inch log under the tree, then measured 12 feet from the base, and cut the tree into twelve foot lengths. He did the remaining trees, then carried the chainsaw back over to the cabin, and dragged the logs over to the cabin using the dolly and harness. The 12 foot logs were a lot easier to drag than the other tree had been. By the afternoon, Roy had over 30 12-foot logs piled up near where he was going to build the room. He decided to call it quits and try his hand at fishing for dinner. He set all the tools back, grabbed his shoulder holster and his fanny pack, put them on and then grabbed his fishing rod and tackle box.

Roy hiked down to the lake, drank his fill, refilled his water containers, then walked north to his fishing spot. He baited a hook, and cast it into the lake, then waited for the lure to sink. He sat down to wait, then started gently jerking the rod tip to give the lure some action. After a couple of minutes, Roy started reeling the line in, and about halfway in, he got a strike that ripped the line off the reel. He set the drag, and the fight was on. This fish fought differently than the last 2, almost like he was snagged on a log, but it kept moving. As he got it closer to the shore, it looked like a huge lake trout. This one was almost 15 pounds by looking at it, and Roy quickly beached it, and put it on his stringer, and back in the water to stay fresh. He re-baited the hook and cast it out again, and wound up almost in the same spot as before. This time, he didn't get any strikes, so he reeled it back in, then cast to a different spot further out in the lake. He let the lure sink to the bottom, then started twitching the rod tip to make the lure dance. After about a half dozen wiggles, something hit his line like it was snagged again. He set the hook, then started reeling the fish in. It was another 10 pound lake trout. He thought they must be spawning to be in so close to shore. When he got hold of the fish, he added it to the stringer, and re-baited the hook and launched it out a third time. This time it just sat there, and Roy reeled it back in, and cast to another area, but still nothing. He decided to take his 20 pounds of lake trout and go home. He picked up his stringer, and headed back to the cabin.

When he got home, he opened the door, and dropped the fish on the table, then put up his fishing gear, and quickly cleaned and filleted the fish, then scored it so he could smoke it. He remembered he had salt, so he liberally sprinkled salt on the fish before he walked out to put it in the smokehouse. The smokehouse was cold since it hadn't been used since last fall, and Roy lit a large smoky fire in the smokehouse after he got the fillets hung. He closed the smokehouse

door, then went into the cabin to pick up the fish guts to see if Oliver was around. He walked to the door and whistled, and sure enough Oliver came trotting on in from the forest. He figured Oliver was watching him bring in the fish, and wanted his share. He plopped the pile of guts on the ground and stepped back. Oliver walked up and ate the whole pile in a few bites, grinned at Roy, then trotted off toward his cave. “Well, that’s gratitude for you.” exclaimed Roy. He took some caribou jerky, sliced it up and put it in a pot of boiling water, and when it was well hydrated, added some mashed potato mix, and some seasonings, then when it was done, spooned it onto a plate, said grace, and ate dinner. When he finished, Roy read his Bible before going to sleep.

Chapter 5 - I'm a (Modern) Lumberjack...

The next morning, Roy ate the leftovers from last night, and got moving early since he had a lot of work to do. First he put on all his safety gear except his gloves and hardhat, picked up the chainsaw by the guard, walked over to the stored gasoline and oil, and topped off the chainsaw before heading out to saw down some more logs. He was going to try to get enough logs to finish the job today, so he could use the dollies to build the A-frame for the crane he was going to need to lift the logs into place. He selected 6 additional trees that would work for his cabin, cleared all the debris from around the tree in case he had to move quickly to get out of the way, then put on the rest of his gear. Once he had made sure everything was where he wanted it, He carried the saw over next to the first tree, lowered the visor on his hardhat, primed the chainsaw, then pulled the starter cord a couple of times. When it started, he let it idle for a few minutes, then grabbed the chain brake and picked up the chainsaw. When he got it into position to make the first cut, he released the chain brake, and revved the motor. He quickly cut a wedge out of the first tree so it would fall where he wanted it to, then grabbing the chain brake, went to the other side of the tree, released the brake and made a quick cut to join the wedge. He quickly pulled the saw out of the cut, and the tree started falling right where he wanted it to. He stepped back, making sure he had a good hold on the chainsaw as the tree fell with a loud crash. He felt like yelling "Timber.." but there was no one around. He quickly moved to the other trees, and within an hour, all 6 trees were down, and Roy started de-limbing them with the chainsaw. Since he was going to use these to build the roof, Roy figured he should just cut these trees in half, then cut them in half lengthwise with the plank attachment

He remembered he was going to need some planks for flooring, so he looked for the biggest tree he could safely cut, and there was an old one almost 2 feet in diameter, and over 50 feet tall that would make a lot of planks. He shut off the chainsaw, cleared the debris from around the tree, and carefully planned the drop, since this was a big heavy tree. He thought he could drop it towards the clearing OK, but he had to make that wedge cut perfect, since he'd only get one try. Saying a quick prayer, Roy walked over to the tree, patted its trunk, and said, "Sorry Old Timer, but I need your wood." He picked up the chainsaw, set it near the tree where he planned to make his wedge cut, and pulled the starter cord. The chainsaw roared into life, and Roy let it idle for a few seconds before he picked it up and got ready to make his first cut. He would have to be fast to keep this tree from splintering and ruining it. He made an aggressive wedge cut, made the second cut to remove the wedge, quickly walked around the tree, and made his final cut, then pulled the chainsaw out. No sooner had he pulled the chainsaw free, then the tree started falling. He quickly backed away in case the base kicked out, but the tree just leaned over and fell. It was almost a perfect tree felling, and no one was there to congratulate him.

With the tree down, Roy started de-limbing the monster tree. It took several hours, and finally he had the tree de-limbed and ready to cut into 10 foot sections to make the floor of his new

room. First he needed to cut the other trees into sections to finish the roof, so he quickly set a log under the center of the 6 trees he'd cut earlier, then cut them in half. He took a couple of logs and his tape measure over to the other tree, measured 10 foot sections, then propped the trunk up on small logs to keep the chain from striking the dirt and possibly kicking back. When he had the tree up and stable, he picked up his chainsaw, looked it over, then set it on top of the tree and pulled the starter cord. As soon as the motor warmed up, Roy grabbed the safety bar, and revved the motor to make his first cut. The saw blade was so sharp and aggressive that it cut through the tree in nothing flat, then he moved on down the tree to cut it into 5 more sections. When he was finished, he shut off the saw, and walked it back to the cabin and set it on the porch to cool off

He took off his Kevlar safety equipment, strapped his fanny pack and shoulder holster on, grabbed the dollies and the harness to drag the logs over to the building site. The first six trees were a breeze, but the 5 sections of the big old tree were Herculean tasks. Finally Roy had all his wood over at the building site, now he could make his A-frame crane and get to work. He took a large coil of 1 inch manila rope over to the logs he had cut to make the A-frame, and started lashing the 6-foot log to the 20- foot long log. When he completed that, he rolled the whole assembly over, and lashed the other log to the same point. When the lashings were complete, he stood one log end on a dolly, and the other on the other dolly, then stood the whole thing up, and quickly lashed a smaller log about 2 feet from the top to hold the legs in an isosceles triangle to use the logs as a pivot and the weight bearing member of the crane. Next, he took some heavy chain, wrapped it around the end of the long pole he was using as a derrick, and attached the chain pulley to the pole using a very heavy nut and bolt to hold the chain. The chain pulley was rated at 1 ton, and was self-locking so he didn't need to worry about dropping the load. He wanted to use a counterbalance on the other end, and he thought if he filled a tarp with dirt, and closed the top using Paracord through the grommets like a purse, he could easily maneuver the crane, and adjust the counterbalance as necessary. The derrick towered almost 20 feet in the air when Roy pushed down on the counterbalance, and it was fairly easy to move. He was glad they gave him a long length of chain in the chain pulley so he could work it from the ground even if it was way in the air. Now that the longest log was only 12 feet long, Roy could easily roll them into place without the dolly, then lift them into place with the crane.

He rolled the first 3 logs into place, then took out the brace and bit, and drilled 2 holes in each log, then cut a piece of rebar into 3 foot lengths with the rebar cutter, dropped them into the holes, and hammered them into the dirt with the 2 pound sledge hammer. Once Roy had the first course in, he double checked he was still square by measuring the diagonals, and he was close enough for gov't work. He notched the tops of the logs and chinked it with mud, and each successive layer would have to be notched and chinked. He cut notches with his axe and hatchet to fit the next course, and spread mud chinking over the centers of the logs. Roy then drove 2 6-foot pieces of rebar into the ground next to the cabin on either side of the bottom log to act as a guide to make sure the wall was straight until he could drive the lag bolts in to secure the logs to the existing wall. He quickly notched the next course of logs before the mud could dry, and lifted it into place using his improvised crane, then turned the log so it lined up with

the lower logs, and Roy lowered the log into place. He tapped the log into place using a heavy mallet, then added some more chinking to the center of the logs he'd just put in place. Roy notched the next set of logs, and thought "this is just like the Lincoln Log set I had growing up as a kid." He hooked a choker around the center of the next log to be lifted, positioned the crane, and hauled on the chain hoist until the log was high enough to swing into place. Roy lowered it into place, and tapped it home with the mallet. Roy disconnected the choker from the log, grabbed the next log, and quickly had it in place. He was almost 1/3 finished with the walls when it started getting dark. He had about a 2 foot high wall started, and 4 more feet to go before he could put on the roof.

Before Roy went inside, he measured where the logs were in relation to the wall, so he could drill and lag bolt them together. The mayor gave Roy something that looked like a lug wrench to turn the lag bolts, he said it would be easier and faster than a ratchet wrench. It had a socket head that matched the lag bolt head, two large arms, and a padded cushion on a bearing so he could use body weight to help push the lag bolt into the wood. Good thing too, since the lag bolts were almost 2 feet long. He went inside, measured from the corner in, and made a mark, then went to the other wall, measured in, and made a mark, then he went outside again, and measured the inside of the wall. Starting at one mark, he measured over, and made another mark, then did the same on the other side. Roy now had 4 marks on the wall than told him were the edges of the logs were, and if he split the distance between the two marks, it should be the center of the log. He already knew how tall the wall was outside so he knew where to drill to put in the lag bolts. He got out the brace and bit and started drilling, soon he was through the inside log, and he made contact with the outside log, when he bottomed out the bit, he backed it out of the hole, put a lag bolt and fender washer into the hole. Roy picked up the tool, set the socket on the head of the lag bolt, and grabbed the handles. Using his chest to push, he started turning the handles clockwise, and the lag bolt went in fairly easily. A couple of minutes later, the lag bolt was tight. Roy picked up the brace and bit, and drilled the other holes, then drove the lag bolt into the hole. He moved over to the other side and repeated the process. Now those logs were firmly tied into the cabin, and not going anywhere. Roy decided to leave the rebar guides in until he had the entire wall built and lag bolted to the cabin. Roy decided to eat some jerky and drink water for dinner, and get some sleep, since he was exhausted.

Chapter 6 - And the Walls go Up.

Roy got dressed, ate a piece of jerky for breakfast, and went outside to get his walls up. He thought it would go much faster if his logs were pre-notched, so he set about notching all the logs he was going to use with his hatchet and axe. A couple of hours later, he was ready to resume building. Roy added a layer of mud chinking to the last set of logs, positioned the crane, hooked the choker cable around the next log to be lifted, and hauled it into position, turned the log so it was facing the right way, and lowered it onto the log. He disconnected the choker, and smacked the log with the mallet to seat it. Roy hooked the choker around the next log, positioned the crane, and lifted it into place. He kept this up until all the logs were in place, and set. Roy then took his measuring tape, measured the wall from bottom to top, and noted the centers of all the rest of the logs he needed to attach with lag bolts, then checked the other wall. He went inside, put washers on 10 lag bolts, picked up a pencil and the tape measure, and marked the center of the other logs, then drilled the marks with the brace and bit, then drove in the lag bolts. Roy loved working with less primitive tools - it would have taken him all week to chop those trees down, and he'd still be building the room in November.

Roy stopped dead in his tracks - How was he going to get slope for the roof, since the walls were square and level? and what would he make the roof out of? He didn't have enough wood to make planks for the roof and the floor out of that one tree, and they were cut too short. They'd need to be at least 15 feet long, and maybe almost 20. he had those trees he was going to use for rafters, but what did he need to cover the roof with. Puzzled, Roy looked up at the ceiling of his cabin, it looked like regular planks to him. Wait a minute, the rafters are going the other way. That's it, he'd make a ridge line pole with 2 inner supports to hold up this end of the roof, and the other end could rest on the far wall. But he still needed to support those rafters. If he cut logs in a stair step fashion he could tie the rafters to the logs, and the roof would be supported along its whole length. He'd need a couple of logs about the same diameter, and cut at 2,4,6, and 8 foot lengths to have a rafter every 2 feet to carry the snow load, then he'd need to drop a couple of bigger trees to make planks out of for the roof, then top it with roofing paper and sod. He'd need to drill holes through them to tie them together with rebar, since he didn't have any lag screws long enough, or enough of them. He'd have to drill holes in the logs every foot or so to drop rebar through them to hold them in place, and he'd have to see how many lag bolts he had. Roy had some more tree felling to do. As his Dad told him, "No one drowned in sweat." By now it was getting late in the day, and Roy decided that he could drown in sweat tomorrow, and packed it in for the day. He put everything up, ate some jerky for dinner, read his Bible, and went to bed early.

The next morning, Roy ate breakfast, then grabbed his chainsaw, put on all his safety gear, and carried the chainsaw outside to fill it up with gas and oil. He hoped there was another “Old Timer” in the forest nearby, since he would need something that big, or he’d have to cut down 3 smaller trees to get enough planking to cover the roof. When he walked into the woods, there was a tree that almost seemed to be “Old Timer’s” twin brother. Roy was glad, thinking “this could be easier than I thought.” He put the chainsaw down, cleared all the debris away from the tree, and carefully planned the drop. When he had everything figured, he put on the gloves and hardhat, flipped down the visor, and walked the chainsaw close to where he was going to make his wedge cut. Roy primed the carb, grabbed the chain brake, and pulled the starter rope. After a few pulls, the chainsaw started right up. He let it warm up for a few minutes, then picked it up, revved the motor, and released the chain brake. Roy made another perfect wedge cut, then turned around, and made his main cut, pulling the saw out from the cut just as the tree started to fall. He quickly walked away from the tree just in case, but again it was a perfect drop. The tree fell right where Roy wanted it to, and it broke clean at the cut. He then de-limbed the tree, and rolled it onto some logs so he could cut it into 20 foot lengths. Roy used a tape measure just to be sure. Earlier he had measured from the roof line on the cabin to the far wall, and it was 16 feet, so that would give him a good overhang to keep the snow off the wall as much as possible. He marked the tree in 20 foot increments, and proceeded to cut it into 20-ft sections, getting 3 good sections, and 1 short section that he could use for other stuff. Roy carried the chainsaw back home, took off his safety gear, and almost had a Connipion fit. The Dollies were still on the crane. He carefully picked up one leg at a time of the crane, and got the dollies out. Roy was awfully glad the crane was just resting on the dollies instead of connected more permanently. He went back in the cabin to get the harness, and carried the harness and dollies over to the sections of tree, rolled the sections onto the dollies, and pulled them home with the harness. This was twice as hard as last time, since the last ones were only 10 foot sections. Eventually, Roy got the trees over to the work site.

Roy sat down for a while, and read up on how to install the plank cutting attachment to the chainsaw. He wanted 4-6 inch thick planks, and didn’t have to worry about rough edges, since the roofing paper was going to make it waterproof. The planks were just there for support. After reading the directions twice, he picked up the attachment, and the enclosed tools, mounted the plank cutter to the chainsaw, and set the depth at 2 inches to remove the bark without wasting too much wood. He went back inside the cabin, put on all his safety gear including his hard hat and gloves, then went out, double checked the equipment, crossed his fingers, and pulled the starter cord. The chainsaw fired right up, and kept running when he turned it on its side to line up the guard with the edge of the log. The guide set the thickness of the planks, and the width was determined by how big in diameter the tree was, and how close to the center you were. Roy had already checked this tree against the length of his bar, and he made it with an inch to spare. As he started feeding the log into the chainsaw, the sawdust was flying everywhere. Good thing he was wearing a full face shield. Roy made the first pass, then engaged the chain brake, and walked back to the top of the log. He reset the guide to make a 4

inch plank next. the rest of the morning, Roy cut planks out of the tree. By evening, he had enough planks to cover the roof. Roy had enough, and was more than ready to call it a day. He put everything up, washed up, ate dinner, and went to bed exhausted.

Chapter 7 - Roy makes Flooring

Roy woke up the next morning well rested, made breakfast which included coffee for the first time in almost a year, then donned his safety gear, and went outside to finish sawing the 10-ft logs he'd cut the other day into planks for his new floor. Roy wanted to finish with the planking attachment so he could take it off in case he needed to log some more trees. He picked up the chainsaw, took it outside to top off the fluids and check the saw over carefully. The teeth on the saw were still razor sharp - that was a major change from the last time he owned a chainsaw, then he thought that had been almost 10 years, and the metallurgy had changed since then, and the teeth probably had an extra-hard coating on them, like the Titanium Nitride he had on his knives. After he had thoroughly inspected the saw and filled all the fluids, he carried it over to his work area, set the 10 ft log onto the saw horses, and set the width of the plank cutting attachment so that just the bark would be removed. Since these floorboards had to fit together, Roy had to remove the bark so he could get fairly square planks.

Roy put on his helmet and gloves, dropped the face shield, primed the carb, and pulled the starter cord. The saw started on the first pull, and he let it idle for a minute to warm up before he lifted the chainsaw up to the log, and rested the guide on the outside of the log. When he was ready to start cutting, Roy released the chain brake and revved the throttle, then slowly fed the chainsaw into the wood, wood chips were flying everywhere, and he was thankful for the face shield. When he had made the first pass, Roy grabbed the chain brake, idled the saw and set it down in a safe spot, then took his logger's tool and rolled the log 90 degrees to cut some more bark off. He repeated the process until he had 4 clean sides. Roy then rolled the log so the widest face was up - he wanted planks that were wider than they were thick, set the guide to 3 inches and started cutting. As he finished the planks, Roy set them aside in a pile to put inside the new room later. Roy's planks were averaging 12 inches each, so he cut a total of 15 planks so he had some spares. Roy had a log left that he had already removed the bark from, and thought he could use some bigger boards and posts, especially for the door frame, and to support the floorboards, and keep them out of the muck, so he set the plank cutter for 6 inches and cut the log up into 12x6 x 10 ft planks and got about 15 planks from the log. He needed 3 to form the door frame, which left 12 to hold up the floor. Roy made a note to himself to order some decking nails to secure the planks to the floor joists, then thought of something, shut off the chainsaw, and walked into the cabin to check the manual.

Sure enough, there WAS a way to cut the 12 x 6 planks into posts using the planking attachment, and it showed him how in the manual - all he had to do was re-arrange a few guides, and he could saw through 3 planks at a time to make posts - they definitely wouldn't look like they came from a lumber mill, but he didn't care. He could get twice as many 6x6 posts out of his 12 x 6 planks, and really support the floor. Roy took the Owner's Manual outside, and the tool kit that Stihl provided with the saw, disconnected and re-arranged parts of the plank cutting attachment so that the guide would allow him to cut the planks to half-width 3 at a time. He set 3 12 x 6 planks on the sawhorse, lined them up as neatly as possible, put his

safety gear back on, and started the chainsaw. Putting the guide on the right side of the plank, Roy released the chain brake, and fed the wood into the saw. He worked very carefully because he was relying on the mass of the wood to prevent any pieces from jumping around and causing havoc. When Roy had the 12 planks cut into 6x6 posts, he breathed a sigh of relief. A couple of posts had jumped around right as he got to the end, but the guide kept them in line enough to finish the cut. When Roy was finished, he took the plank cutter off the chainsaw, and sat down to catch his breath. Roy said a prayer of thanksgiving that nothing had happened to him, and also prayed that he'd never have to do anything that foolhardy again. Roy knew Chainsaws were nothing to experiment with, and they weren't designed to become improvised saw mills.

Roy took inventory of his "building materials" - Door frame - check, floorboards - check, floor joists - check, roofing planks - check, ceiling joists - check. The only things he was missing was the set of logs, the ridge pole and the 2 posts that went around the doorframe to hold up the center of the ridgepole. Roy found an 8 inch log that would work for the stepped logs to get the slope for the roof, and carefully measured two of each length he would need, then put his gloves and hardhat back on, fired up the chainsaw, and made short work of the logs. Roy next marked 1 foot intervals on the logs to drill holes to drop rebar through and tie them together. Roy took off his safety gear, walked back to the cabin for his brace and bit, then spent the rest of the afternoon drilling holes in the logs. When he had finished, Roy counted the number of lag bolts he had left - he had 20 bolts and washers left, just enough to bolt the new logs to the cabin wall, and bolt the doorframe to the logs. By the time it got dark, Roy was all too willing to call it quits. He packed up all his gear, and went inside to eat and sleep.

The next morning, Roy was looking around for the ridgepole, he knew it was around here somewhere - he had cut an 8 inch tree into a 12 foot length so it would overhang the walls by a foot so he could attach it to the walls. Finally, Roy found it behind the wall of the cabin. Roy walked around the cabin to get his ladder - the lighter one this time. Roy carried it over to the wall, then set up the crane to hoist the logs, then carefully marked and drilled holes in the top log of the wall so that the rebar would tie all the other logs together, then climbed back down and cut the rebar to the right lengths, and set it into the holes. Roy attached the choke chain to the 8 foot length of log, lifted it into place, stuck the rebar into the holes, and slowly lowered the log and guided it down onto the top of the last log. When he got it within 6 inches, Roy scampered down the ladder, grabbed some mud chinking, and laid it between the logs, then set the log down and tapped it home with the mallet. Roy unhooked the choker chain from the last log, hooked up the 6 footer, guided it into position and inserted the rebar into the log, and slowly lowered the log while adjusting the rebar. Roy filled in the gap with chinking, then lowered the log all the way down and released the choker. Roy repeated the process with the 4ft and 2 ft logs, then moved to the other side. Roy finished mounting the stepped logs, then finished the day by lifting the ridge pole into place, drilling a hole through both ends, and driving rebar down the holes to tie the ridgepole to the walls. Roy wanted to tackle the roof another day, and he still had to cut the door, brace it with a new doorframe, and lay the floor for the new room. Roy policed up the area, packed up his tools, went inside to make a list of the stuff he was going to need, then called the mayor to ask if Jim could run it up for him in the

next week. The mayor told Roy that Jim would be making his usual run later this week, and he'd see what he could get between now and then. Roy thanked him, and signed off. Roy made dinner, read his Bible, then went to sleep.

Chapter 8 - Roy the Roofer

Roy got up early, got dressed, ate a good breakfast of oatmeal with cinnamon, sugar, and raisins and drank some coffee. Roy was going to need all the energy he could get today. Roy made shallow notches on the ridgepole every foot to match the rafters, and notched the top log of the far wall as well. Then he lifted the rafters into place, and drilled through the connections, and pounded in a short piece of rebar to make sure it was solid. It took longer doing it this way, but Roy knew exactly how fierce the winds were during winter, and didn't want this roof collapsing. Roy next lifted the planks into place, then muscled and slid them exactly where he wanted them to be, and used a 10 penny nail to nail them to the rafters. When he was finished with the roofing planks, Roy walked back down the ladder, hooked the choker cable around the roll of roofing paper, and hoisted it onto the roof. Roy laid the first layer crosswise from the bottom up, with about 8 inches of overlap, nailing it in place with roofing nails, then he took the rest of the roll, and laid a second layer in the opposite direction with 8 inches of overlap, and nailed it down with roofing nails.

Roy could have stopped there, but he wanted to duplicate the trapper's sod roof for extra insulation and protection, so he climbed down off the roof, took his shovel and filled the tarp with good dirt, and lifted the dirt-filled tarp onto the roof, then spread the dirt out. Roy continued until he had about 3 inches of dirt on his roof. Roy was finished with the roof until Jim came with the seeds tomorrow - Roy had ordered enough grass seed to cover both roofs with fresh grass, and the Mayor knew exactly what type of grass Roy needed.

Roy also asked for an additional 300 feet of ½" PVC pipe, and a second pump setup with valves and switches, and a small 50 gallon captive air tank for inside the second room. Roy was going to have inside plumbing. Well water anyway, as long as it didn't freeze. Roy knew this would be a much more involved task, and probably wouldn't work in the winter, but he needed the water for the garden, and if he was going to pump water halfway to the cabin, why not the rest of the way. Roy also ordered a water heater attachment for his wood stove, and a utility basin with faucets for hot and cold water. Since he was done as far as he could go on the house today, Roy started working on his water distribution system. He grabbed the big wheeled cart, his solar powered pump, and all the PVC pipe he had along with the glue and connectors, put his pickaxe on the top, strapped on his fanny pack and shoulder holster, and pushed the whole assembly to the lake. Roy dropped the pump assembly off near where he had planned his garden, and set up the solar panels to begin charging. Roy took out his compass, took a bearing to the lake, and drove in a flag that he could spot from the lake at the site to help him keep on line. Roy then went to the water's edge, took a 20 ft piece of pipe, tied a piece of netting over the end to keep junk out of the water, and laid 15 feet of it into the lake. Roy stuck a rock under the underwater end to keep it off the bottom, then proceeded to dig a trench for the rest of it. When he came to the other end, he glued on a connector, added another 20 feet of pipe, and kept going. He knew it was going to freeze in the winter, but he didn't need it then, and it probably wouldn't work anyway if the sun wasn't out, so he dug a shallow trench and buried it.

Roy planned to store the pump assemblies during the winter anyway, so he wasn't worried about freezing. If Jim had a scuba tank, he'd blow the pipes out and plug them, but if not, the pipes would probably not crack, since schedule 40 PVC was fairly sturdy. The soil was fairly soft, so Roy made it to the first pumping station by nightfall, and left his tools there. The plane would be arriving the next morning. Roy thought about that, and realized that he had left plenty of room for the plane to taxi in, since the garden was off to one side. Just to be on the safe side, Roy drove in another flag, and tied some surveyor's tape to the sticks to make them even more visible. If Jim missed that, he'd need to talk to the FAA about Jim's ability to see well enough to fly. When he was finished, Roy headed home for dinner and bedtime. Roy got home just as the light was fading, and decided some more oatmeal would be good for dinner, and he ate a piece of jerky. He sprinkled salt on the jerky this time before he ate it, and it was much better. Roy would have to have them ship a couple of gallons of Teriyaki Sauce with the next trip to marinate the jerky with for next year. After dinner, Roy read his Bible, then fell asleep.

Chapter 9 - Jim the Delivery Man

The next morning, Roy awoke to the roar of a big plane - Dang, he'd overslept again. Roy quickly got dressed, and walked outside just as Jim taxied up to the door. Roy didn't need to worry about his garden, Jim missed it by over 20 feet. When he'd finished taxiing, Jim shut down the engine, and came climbing out of the cab. "Roy, I can't stay long, but I made you the first stop, since as usual, you order the most stuff. You keep this up, and I'll have to paint the plane brown and wear a brown shirt and short pants." Jim and Roy both got a good laugh out of that. Jim handed Roy the manifest, and Roy helped him unload. Roy noticed a small box with his gunsmith's address on it - If it was the shoulder holster set, his gunsmith was working fast. Roy set it aside, and helped Jim finish unloading. When they were finished, Roy asked Jim if he could stay for coffee. Jim said maybe next time - he was in a hurry and had to be back to the airport by noon to fly in some customers for a hunting lodge. Roy shook Jim's hand and thanked him, then Jim jumped in the cabin, closed the door, fired up the plane's engine, turned around, and taxied out of there.

Within minutes he was airborne and out of sight. Roy was very curious about the contents of the box, and cut it open with his pocket knife. It was the shoulder holster, exactly as he had ordered, and another box of .44 Magnum ammo with a note, saying they were the gunsmith's personal reloads for the Anaconda that pushed the envelope a little, but were more likely to take down a large bear with one shot. Roy carried the box into the cabin, took off his shoulder holster, and tried the new one on, after a few minor adjustments, it fit perfectly, and the guns locked into the Kydex holsters like it had been custom made for them. Roy transferred the 22/45 and both its mags, as well as the Colt Anaconda to the new holster. Roy looked in the box, and underneath all the stuff was a cleaning kit for the .44 magnum including a large jar of Hoppes #9, some good gun oil, and a tube of graphite powder, which Roy immediately recognized as the lubricant of choice in Alaska, since most oil based lubricants froze in the brutal cold. After wearing the rig for a while, Roy adjusted the tie-down clips as the holster settled in. The only time he was aware of the rig was when his arm brushed against the cylinder of the massive Colt Anaconda. From now on, Roy would wear this rig everywhere outside since he didn't have Oliver to warn him anymore.

Roy took the cart, and the new plumbing supplies down to the garden site, installed a T-connection and 2 gate valves, then the second pump unit to pump the water to the house. Since he was installing a captive air tank, Roy didn't need an on-off switch for the second pump, and thinking about it, disconnected and removed the first one, since the head pressure of both gate valves off would close the pressure sensor that controlled the first pump anyway. If he wanted to water, all he had to do was open the gate valve to the garden, and the drop in pressure would turn on the pump. Roy left the gate valve to the second pump open, since the only time water would be moving through it was if the captive air tank in the cabin ran low. He really installed the gate valve so he could remove the pump in the winter. Roy thought about that, and installed

another gate valve between the lake and the first pump, since he had it anyway, and wasn't going to need it for anything else. Roy finished plumbing his pumping station, leaving the actual manifold piping until later (he had all the connections, he just didn't want to mess with it right now.) and continued to run pipe from his pumping station to the house. A couple of hours later, he made it to the cabin, took his bit and brace, drilled 2 holes in the wall, ran some 2 foot sections of PVC pipe through the walls, and made the connections. The lower one was part of his drain, and he was going to route that to a sand/gravel trap to drain all the water into the ground, and he connected the upper one to the supply pipe. Roy was stuck, since he didn't have access to the other room yet - he hadn't made the door.

Roy figured "No time like the present" and put down all his plumbing stuff on the porch. He took off his shoulder holster and fanny pack, put on his safety gear for the chainsaw, carefully measured and marked the door opening, going a little higher than he needed to frame to the bottom of an existing log, took the chainsaw to his gas and oil supply, filled it up, grabbed the door frame beams and the remaining lag bolts. Roy put on the gloves and hardhat, primed the chainsaw's carb, then pulled the starter cord. The chainsaw started right up, and after a brief warm-up, Roy did a plunge cut right into the upper-right corner of the doorframe, then quickly cut down to the floor, then repeated his plunge cut on the right side of the door. With the doorframe cut out, but still in place, Roy shut off the chainsaw, took the sledgehammer, and knocked the logs out of the door opening. As soon as they were gone, Roy quickly braced the opening with the new beam and posts, and quickly cut them to fit so the crossbeam was resting on the two vertical posts.

Roy quickly marked the centers of the cut logs, and drilled holes to drive lag screws and washers in to hold the opening securely. Roy drove a lag bolt into each log through the posts, and one in the center of the beam, then went inside the new room to measure the ends of the 4 stepped logs so he could attach them to the cabin wall with lag screws. When Roy had their centers marked, he drilled pilot holes, and drove in the lag screws to secure the stepped beams to the wall. Roy now had an official 2- room cabin. Roy needed to set in the floor next before he moved anything into the room, but first he needed to pour a bed of sand onto the dirt to lay the floor joists on to keep them from rotting too fast. Roy walked outside, got the tarp, the shovel and the cart, and started digging sand to fill in the dirt. Roy hauled about a dozen loads by dusk, then smoothed it out as best as he could with the garden rake, and called it quits for the day. Roy went to check his haul, and was puzzled by the 2Kw gas Contractor's generator sitting there. He didn't order one - then he saw a note from the mayor saying this was a loan to use for a week until Jim came back along with the screw gun he had loaned him to drive all those decking screws to do his floor right. Roy stood there with his mouth open, wondering what was going on here, then figured the Mayor was an OK guy, and just wanted to help. Roy put the rest of the stuff under cover, then washed his hands and made dinner, then sat down to read his Bible before falling asleep.

Chapter 9 - Roy gets a Wood Floor

The next morning, after breakfast, Roy took the generator, the extension cord, and the screw gun with the decking screws and set them right on the porch next to his front door. Roy then carried in the floor joists, leaned them against the cabin wall near the door, then made sure he had all 24. He took out his tape measure, then started laying 6x6 floor joists in the sand every 6 inches leveling them as best as he could, then toe nailed them into the logs at the base of the walls to hold them in place. Roy went back outside, got an armload of flooring planks, and laid them where the floor joists had been. Roy checked the generator, topped off the oil and gas, primed the carb, pulled the starter cord, plugged in the extension cord, picked up the screw gun, deck screws and the first piece of planking, and a chalk line marker, carried the plank into the 2nd room, laid it on the joist, and snapped a chalk line in the center of the plank right over the joist, picked up the screw gun and deck screws, and started driving deck screws every foot or so down the line. Roy repeated the process, but used fewer screws in the middle of the room, since the boards were being held in by their neighbors. Finally, Roy had the floor done for all intents and purposes, since he had no intention of sanding, staining, or varnishing it.

Roy took the tools back out, and started carrying in the bigger stuff he needed to go in the room, like the cast iron stove. Roy routed the chimney pipe out through the opening between the roof and the stepped logs that he was going to fill in later with some more boards. This meant the stove had to go in the corner near the common wall, which worked out best anyway, since the heat might keep his bed warmer in the winter. Roy mounted the water heater box to the back of the stove, and connected it to the hot side of the faucet. He connected the captive air tank to the supply pipe, installed a tee connection, then plumbed one side to the water heater, and the other into the sink. Roy took some of his decking screws and mounted the sink to the cabin wall next to the stove, then installed the small pedestal which hid the drain pipe, and connected the drain pipe to the other pipe in the wall. He'd finish building the rest of the drain system later. Roy had a wood-burning stove he could cook on, and soon he was going to have hot and cold running water. He still had an outhouse, but there wasn't anything he could do about that. A septic system could freeze solid up here, and he didn't have year-round water anyway.

Roy carried the rest of his stuff into the cabin, trying to organize it as he went. Roy soon realized to make the best use of space, he was going to need shelves, but he didn't want to tackle that right now. Instead, Roy walked outside the cabin, turned off the generator to conserve fuel, grabbed his shovel and a couple of smaller pieces of scrap wood, and dug a big hole several feet deep about 2 feet away from the cabin, filled the lower half with rocks, and the upper half with sand after he connected the drain outlet to a piece of perforated pipe to disperse the water as it flowed out of the drain. The box that surrounded the hole prevented the water from traveling on the surface, and made sure it was at least a foot beneath the ground before it could percolate out. When he was finished, Roy walked out to the garden, and opened the gate valves to let the water flow into the cabin. Roy could hear the water surging through the pipes

as it tried to drive the air out, so Roy ran to the cabin, and opened the cold water tap to release the air in the lines. About 15 minutes later, the water was pouring steadily out of the faucet, so Roy closed the cold faucet, and opened the hot faucet. Within a minute, water was coming steadily out of the hot faucet as well, so Roy closed that one too. Roy took a good look at the cast iron stove, and noticed the firebox was $\frac{1}{2}$ the size of the fireplace, which meant if he wanted to cook on it, he'd have to cut the wood much smaller. Since he had the right tools, that wouldn't be too much of a problem. Roy decided to call it a day, packed everything up, washed up, then ate dinner and went to bed. Roy thought he had better make the place weather-tight, so tomorrow morning, he was going to fill in those holes in the wall with the scrap lumber left over from his projects.

Roy got up, got dressed, ate breakfast, then scrounged around for some scraps to fill in the holes in his wall. Roy spotted some cast-offs from his plank cutting process that were too thin to use, but were more than thick enough for what he needed. The ladder was still up against the cabin wall, so Roy climbed up with the piece of wood, and a pencil to rough fit the piece to the opening. Roy marked the size of the opening, and the size and location of the chimney pipe, then climbed back down. Roy had a leftover piece of chimney pipe to draw the exact size of the hole needed, the brace and bit and a keyhole saw made short work of the hole, and a crosscut saw quickly cut the board to size. Roy dragged the generator outside, hooked up the extension cord, the screw gun, then started the generator as he picked up a handful of decking screws, climbed the ladder, slipped the wood over the chimney pipe, which wasn't finished yet, and screwed it in place. Roy took the ladder around the other side, and marked the size of the opening, then cut the board to fit and scampered back up the ladder, and screwed the board in place. Roy then packed mud chinking around all the openings, filling in the cracks except for the opening for the chimney pipe, which was close enough for government work, and needed a small gap to avoid burning the wood. Roy carried the ladder back around the front, and attached the rest of the chimney pipe to the existing pipe, including the required spark arrester. Roy had selected the highly baffled pipe, since the wind could howl around there. Roy quickly remembered, and shut off the generator.

Roy put up all the stuff, and separated the stuff the mayor had loaned him from his stuff so he could send it back the next time Jim showed up, then went to go chop wood for his stove. Roy had some 2 foot long wood he was going to save for the fireplace, and some scraps he could feed to the stove right now. What he needed was a fresh supply of hardwood cut to length for the cast iron stove. Roy thought he had one last use for the crane, then he could steal the dollies back, so he would tackle that first. He had a couple of 50 pound bags of seed that he didn't want to haul up the ladder to spread grass seed on the roofs, so Roy used the tarp and the crane to haul a bag onto each roof, then climbed the ladder, opened the bag, and started tossing grass seed onto the roof, then when he had spread both bags, he remembered he needed to water the seeds, so he walked back up and down the ladder with a bucket of water until both roofs were well watered. Roy thought there must be a better way, and another part of his brain said, "Stop complaining, last year you were dragging water from the lake." Roy realized he was being a whiner, and stopped whining.

When he was finished, he put on all his safety gear, then grabbed the chainsaw and took the dollies out from under the crane, and decided to go logging. Roy walked about 50 yards to the hardwood trees, and selected a couple of the smaller ones, cleared the brush, put on his gloves and hard hat, started the chainsaw, and quickly felled 6 large trees. Roy propped the trunks up on logs, then de-limbed them and piled the trunks onto the dollies for the trip back. When he got back to the cabin, he set the first log in the sawhorse, and proceeded to cut foot-long segments off it at a very fast pace. He cut the rest of the logs into foot long pieces within an hour, and set down the chainsaw, and turned it off. Roy picked up his splitting maul, and set the log on a stump to protect the maul, and started splitting the log into 2 pieces at a swing. Roy soon had a huge pile of small wood for the stove, and started transferring it into the 2nd room along the wall around the stove and the sink. Roy filled in all the available space with wood, and set a galvanized bucket full of tinder next to the stove to start it in the morning. Roy picked up the chainsaw, put it on the porch to cool off, and took off his protective gear, then went inside to check out the stove. Before he lit the stove, Roy double checked everything was clear, and there weren't any surprises in store for him, and the chimney's damper was open. Roy set a small fire in the firebox to check the draft, and it was working perfectly. Roy walked outside to check the new chimney, and there were no leaks, and everything looked good. Roy went back inside, and fed the fire until the cast iron stove was red hot and smoking, then let it cool. Roy knew he'd have to do this a couple of times to get rid of the preservatives that they put on the metal at the factory before he could cook on it due to the smell the preservatives gave off when they heated up. Roy opened the door to vent the cabin and get rid of the smell. Roy was curious to try the new water heater, and turned on the hot water tap. In minutes, the water was almost boiling hot. Roy would have to be careful with the hot water, and not trust it like he trusted his home hot water not to be scalding hot. At least he didn't need to use the fireplace to make tea anymore. Roy almost smacked himself when he remembered - He HAD a tea pot. Now that he had a stove, he could make tea like a civilized person. When the stove had cooled completely, Roy fired it back up, and soon the preservative was cooking off the metal. Roy let it cool again, then cleaned the ashes from the firebox. Roy didn't need the ashes anymore, since he had bought a 12 pack of soap in his first shipment of stuff, so he took them around back and dumped it onto his garden. By the time he got back it was getting dark, so Roy decided to eat dinner and go to bed. Tomorrow he'd need to tackle the garden. Roy thought he was even busier than when he was just surviving. He was right. Roy ate dinner, read his Bible, then went to bed.

Chapter 10 - Roy the Gardener

When Roy got up, he got dressed, used his stove for the first time to make oatmeal with cinnamon and raisins, and coffee. When he was finished, he put on his shoulder holster and fanny pack, grabbed the cart, his gardening tools, and some other stuff he might need, and wheeled the cart out to his garden site. Roy had a long day's work ahead of him. First thing he had to do was turn and aerate the soil, so he took a shovel and started digging a 20 ft x 20 foot square of ground where he wanted to plant stuff. When he got the ground turned, he went back through it with a tool that looked like a pitchfork, but was used to bust up any clods of dirt. By this time he finished, Roy needed a breather. Roy sat down on a nearby log, and drank from his canteen, then refilled it from the pipe that was to water the garden by opening the gate valve and closing it when his canteen was full. Roy was pleasantly surprised that the water flowed away from the pipe, and to the other end of the garden, just as he hoped. Roy then picked up a bow rake, and raked the garden as level as he could get it, then carved rows with his hoe. He wanted to plant rows about 1 foot apart to prevent crowding, so he spaced the rows a little over 1 foot apart, to leave room for water channels. When Roy had the rows all ready to plant, he sat on the log again, and read the directions on the seed packets to make sure he sowed the seeds correctly, and planted compatible plants next to each other.

Since part of the growing season was already over, he was going to plant his fast growing vegetables and root vegetables this year, then try some of his slower growing varieties next year. Roy planted a row of carrots, a row of onions, a row of garlic, several rows of salad greens, a row of cabbage since it grew so well in this area, and since he had room left over, a bed of potatoes. Roy was also going to start a compost heap to fertilize the garden. He had some seeds left, but they were nitrogen fixers that he would plant after his crops came in, then turn under to boost the nitrogen in the soil for next year. When Roy was finished planting the seeds, he carefully covered them with his hoe, then started building the open manifold he was going to use to water the garden with. Roy attached a Tee connection to the end of the pipe that came out of the gate valve for the garden, then cut a bunch of pipe about a foot and a half long using the Remgrit saw blade on his Gerber Multitool, and built a manifold with 8 tees and 2 90-degree elbows, and stuck a short piece of pipe into each opening to guide the water into the ditches he was going to use to water the garden. When he finished, Roy opened the gate valve to the garden, and water flowed into all 10 ditches. Roy noticed that more water was flowing out of the center pipes, and less out of the edges. Roy scratched his head for a minute, then stuck his hand in front of the openings, and it was enough to stop the flow to the 2 inner pipes. Roy let the 2 inner ditches fill with water, then covered them with his hands and let the outer ditches fill. Roy was going to have to bring a piece of wood from now on so he could block more pipes to more evenly distribute the water. When the ditches were flooded, Roy shut off the water at the gate valve, and waited for the water to percolate on down. When the water went down, Roy opened the gate valve again, and flooded the garden again. When it had flooded a second time, Roy shut off the water, picked up his tools, and headed back to the cabin.

When he got back, he put the tools up in the second room, and washed his hands in the sink. Roy could get used to running water. Since it was about dinner time, Roy fired up the woodstove so he could cook something for dinner. Roy looked around the cabin, and found his canned food he had ordered, and located one of his favorite foods as a kid - a can of Spaghetti-Os. Roy took out a saucepan, opened the can, and dumped the contents into the saucepan. Roy stirred the pot occasionally, and when he was finished, he emptied it into a bowl, said grace, and ate it with a spoon like he used to as a kid. When he was finished, he washed out the pan and the bowl in the sink with hot water, then put them up. Roy grabbed a washcloth and a bar of soap, since he had the hot water, he might as well bathe. He filled the sink with hot and cold water since the straight hot water was way too hot, then lathered up a washcloth and took off his clothes, and scrubbed himself from head to toe. When he was all lathered up, he quickly drained the sink and refilled it with clean water, wrung the wash cloth until he got rid of the soap, and rinsed the soap off of his skin, then toweled himself dry, and put on clean clothes. Roy felt much better being clean. He had thought of getting a tub, but he couldn't stand sitting in dirty water. Roy then washed the clothes he had just taken off, and grabbed his washboard to really scrub the dirt out. The first time he drained the sink, the water came out black - Roy thought he should probably wash his clothes more often. When he had his clothes rinsed and wrung dry, Roy strung up a rope in the room on 2 nails, and hung his clothes to dry. By now it was getting dark, so Roy sat down to read his Bible for a while and went to bed.

The next morning, after he got dressed and ate breakfast, Roy put on his safety gear to go fell some trees for firewood. Roy decided to leave the trees surrounding his cabin standing for now, and fell the trees further away from his cabin so he would have an emergency supply of wood. Roy picked up the chainsaw, his gloves and helmet, and walked outside to fill up his chainsaw and check the oil. When he was finished checking the chainsaw, he grabbed the dollies and the harness, and dragged the dollies behind him to the large stand of trees on the far end of the clearing. Roy set everything down, selected which trees he wanted, then planned the drop, and cleared all the loose brush and debris from around the trees so he wouldn't trip if he had to move fast, then put on his gloves and helmet. Roy dropped the face shield, and bent over to start the chainsaw. When it was idling for a minute, Roy picked it up, released the brake, and made his first wedge cut, then his bottom cut to clear the wedge, and quickly moved around the back of the tree, and cut straight through to the center of the wedge. As he yanked the chainsaw out of the expanding cut, and engaged the chain brake, the tree toppled with a loud cracking sound, and Roy quickly stepped back several steps just in case the tree fell badly. Roy moved over to the next tree, repeated the process, and within an hour or two, he had a dozen trees on the ground. Roy started de-limbing the trees by propping the trunk up on a log, and cutting the branches off. Soon he had a dozen large trunks, and a pile of branches sorted by size. Roy would come back later and cut the larger branches into usable size to burn in the wood stove.

Roy rolled each trunk onto the dollies and dragged them over to the sawhorse, then walked back to get the chainsaw, helmet and gloves from where he had left them next to the trees, and carried them over to the sawhorse. Roy donned the rest of his safety gear, cleared the area

around his sawhorse, and started the chainsaw. Roy cut the trunk into foot long pieces so he could use them in either the stove or fireplace, then got the other trunks and cut them up. By this time, Roy was Dog tired, set his gear down on the porch, stripped off his Kevlar jacket and pants, walked inside the cabin, poured a big glass of water from the sink, then sat down and ate a piece of jerky from his fast dwindling supply. Roy thought "I'd better go hunting or at least check the snares pretty soon before I run out of meat. As soon as I've got all the firewood in, I'll check out the hunting areas, and I can fish every day when I have my chores done from now on."

Roy got up after lunch, and walked out to his garden with a large piece of scrap wood, opened the gate valve for the garden, and when the center section was full, blocked the center pipes with the board. The board worked much better than his hand, and he could block 4 outlets at a time, so the outer ditches filled quickly after the center was blocked. When the outer ditches filled, the center ones had drained, so he filled them again, and then re-filled the outer ditches and shut the gate valve. Roy left the piece of wood next to the garden, and walked back to the cabin, grabbed the roll of chicken wire and some long straight poles he had saved from his wood cutting for this purpose, and rolled the whole pile out to the garden on the cart. Roy pounded the first stake in with a rock, then planted a pole every 6 feet around the garden, then took the 4 foot wide roll of chicken wire, and un-rolled it around the poles. When he had completely surrounded the garden in chicken wire, he cut the wire with his Gerber Multitool, then tacked the wire to the poles. Roy then made a second lap around the poles with the remainder of the wire, since he knew those "wascawy wabbits" would try to get at the garden if they could. Roy nailed the second layer over the first, and the combination hopefully would be enough to stop even the most determined rabbit or other garden raiders. Roy left himself a route into the garden by bending the nails on one pole instead of driving them home. It should hold up against a rabbit, but he could open it fairly easily. Roy put the rest of his stuff back on the cart, and rolled it back to the cabin, and put everything up.

Roy grabbed his fishing pole and tackle box on the way out the door, he had already put on his shoulder holster and fanny pack when he went to work in the garden, and walked back to the lake to try his luck at fishing. Roy spent the rest of the afternoon fishing, caught some fish, brought them home to clean and gut them, smoked some of them, and fried one of them for dinner. Roy set the guts outside for Oliver if he was in the neighborhood. Roy whistled for Oliver, but didn't see him, so he left the pile of guts on the corner of the porch, and went back into the cabin to fix dinner. After dinner, Roy cleaned up, washed up, and changed into clean clothes, sat down to read his Bible by kerosene lamp, then went to bed.

Roy woke up at dawn the next morning, got dressed, ate breakfast, put on his leg protectors, picked up his splitting maul, and went outside to split all the wood he had cut the previous day. Roy looked at the massive pile of logs, and shook his head, then got to work. He set a log on top of the stump, picked up the splitting maul, and split the log into quarters. Roy kept it up until he ran out of room, then set the maul down, and started stacking the wood on the far side of the cabin to keep the splitting area clear. When the area was clear again, he started splitting

wood again, and kept alternating splitting and stacking until he had split all the wood he had cut. Roy had a huge pile of split wood, but realized that he would need 5 to 6 times this quantity of wood to make it through the winter, so he had a lot more wood left to fell and split. When he was finished, he took off his safety gear, walked into the cabin and took a drink from the sink and ate some jerky. After a while, he went outside to the garden to water it, turned on the gate valve, flooded the ditches twice, then shut off the gate valve and walked back to the cabin to pick up his fishing gear. Roy fished for the rest of the afternoon, caught some larger fish, a couple of Northern Pike, a lake trout, cleaned and gutted them, then smoked them in the smokehouse. Roy made dinner, washed the dishes, took a sponge bath and washed his clothes, changed into clean clothes, sat down and read his Bible before going to bed.

Chapter 10 - Close Call

Roy woke up early the next morning, got dressed, ate breakfast, and got ready to do chores. He donned his safety gear, grabbed the chainsaw, topped off the fluids, slipped the harness for the dollies over his shoulder, and walked off to the area he was cutting trees. Roy selected another 6 trees to fell, and cleared the brush and debris from around them, planned where he wanted to drop each tree, then started the chainsaw after putting on his gloves and dropping the visor of his helmet. An hour later, all 6 trees were down, and he started de-limbing them. When they were down to trunks, Roy shut off the chainsaw, loaded the logs onto the dolly, and dragged them over to the sawhorse next to the cabin, then picked up the chainsaw, gloves and helmet, and carried them over to the sawhorse. Roy put on the gloves and helmet, lifted the first log into the sawhorse, dropped the visor, and fired up the chainsaw and quickly cut it into 1 foot segments. Roy cut the rest of the logs into 1 foot segments, left them where they lay, and set the chainsaw on the porch to cool.

Roy took off his safety equipment, put on his shoulder holster and fanny pack, picked up his fishing pole and tackle box so he could go fishing after he was done watering the garden, and set off for the garden. When he got there, he turned on the gate valve to let water flow into the garden, and when the middle was full, blocked the pipes with the board to let the edges fill, then switched back to the middle, and back to the edges. When all the ditches had been filled twice, Roy shut off the water, left the board next to the pump, and picked up his fishing rod and tackle box. Roy walked to the lake, and started fishing, but couldn't catch anything. After an hour, Roy got frustrated, reeled the line back in, and headed north to another part of the lake. Roy found a perfect fishing spot about ½ mile north on the lake and he thought he saw big fish rippling on the surface. Roy cast his line out where he thought he saw fish, and almost immediately caught a big fish. Roy landed it, hooked it onto his stringer, then quickly cast again. Roy caught 3 lake trout fairly quickly, then cast way out there, and let the line settle. Just as he was ready to sit down and wait for a strike, Roy heard a loud growl behind him in the bushes - it sounded like a Bear. Roy opened the bail, dropped his rod, and turned around to see a huge bruin standing on his hind legs and growling fiercely at him. Roy reached for his .44 magnum, since the bear was less than 50 yards away, and obviously in no mood to discuss this rationally - probably cranky and hungry after his long nap. Taking a perfect isosceles stance, Roy thumbed back the hammer, settled the front sight on the bear's heart, and said to the bear, "OK we can do this the easy way or the hard way - so tell me, do you feel lucky?" The bear sat down turned around and walked off. Roy carefully set the hammer back down, and said to himself, "If I'd known Bears responded to Clint Eastwood, I'd have tried it sooner."

At that point Oliver showed up, and looked at Roy like "Thanks a lot, there goes dinner." and turned around and walked off into the brush. Roy followed, since he wanted to see the pups. As he got closer to the den, Roy got nervous, because he didn't know how Francine would react to him being so close to the pups. Roy was finally within sight of the den, and Francine was out front nursing the pups, which appeared to be about 6 weeks old. Roy stayed where he was until

Francine saw him, and she turned to the pups instead of getting obviously defensive, so Roy kept getting closer, keeping a close eye on Francine, making sure she was OK with him being there. So far so good - Roy was about 10 feet away. Oliver all of a sudden showed up next to him, so Roy crouched down to pet Oliver, and Oliver let Roy pet him, scratching between his ears. Roy kept speaking softly to Francine, and when she was done nursing, the pups got curious and wandered over to where Roy was. Roy wasn't too sure about this, but since the pups had come to him, he figured Oliver and Francine were OK with it. One of the bigger pups walked right up to Roy, sniffed his hands, then licked his hands. Roy knew that he was OK now unless Francine objected. The other pups came around one by one to introduce themselves, when Roy counted noses, there were 4 pups. That was pretty good for a first litter. Roy hoped they could keep them fed, but none of the pups appeared skinny, Oliver and Francine looked like they were eating well, maybe that's why he hadn't taken so many rabbits this spring - Oliver was catching them to feed his family. Roy thought that was OK, he didn't really like the taste of Rabbit or Squirrel anyway. Roy decided to take down his snares unless it was an emergency, so Oliver and Francine could have all the rabbits.

Roy remembered he'd left his fishing pole by the lake with the line in the water, and hustled back to the lake. As he got there, he could see line going out, but he still had line left, and the rod was still on the beach. Roy quickly picked up the rod, closed the bail with about 100 feet left, and the fight was on. It felt like he hooked a big lake trout or a Pike, but he'd have to see when he got it landed. It took him almost half an hour to land the fish, and it was the largest pike he had ever seen. It was almost 3 feet long, and had a mouth like a barracuda. Roy didn't take any chances, and as soon as he had the fish beached, lopped the head off with his Bowie knife. Roy picked up the fish by the tail, and the stringer, then grabbed the tackle box and headed back to the cabin. Roy skinned and gutted the fish, then cut the fish up to smoke it since he just ate fish the other day. When he had the fish in the smokehouse, Roy had some daylight left, and decided to split some wood. He put his leg and shoe protectors on, grabbed the splitting maul, and walked out back to the pile of logs, set one on the stump, and started splitting wood. When he ran out of room, he piled the split wood on his woodpile out back, then split some more. Roy had half of the wood split when it grew dark, so he decided to call it a day, carried the maul back into the cabin, then cleaned up and made dinner. Roy opened a can of corned beef hash, set a fire in the wood stove, then as the stove got hot, put the pan on the stove, let the pan get hot, and added the corned beef hash. Roy kept stirring it so it wouldn't burn, and slid it onto a plate, added salt and pepper, carried it to the table, sat down and said Grace "God, I just wanted to say thanks for the food, and I especially wanted to thank you for sending that bear away, and letting me see Oliver's pups. Amen" With that, Roy dug into dinner, and soon his plate was empty. Roy carried his dish to the sink, cleaned off the dishes, then poured a sinkful of water to take a bath, then changed clothes, read his Bible, and went to sleep.

Chapter 11 - Getting Ready to Hunt

Roy ate breakfast, did his chores, then thought about what he should do today. Roy felt he should get ready to go hunting while his jerky lasted, since he didn't want to cook outdoors in case it attracted something he'd rather not deal with now that Oliver had a family to take care of. By now, Roy had relegated the flintlock to the spot above the door. He unloaded and thoroughly cleaned it, sealed the container with his possibles bag, powder and lead, then placed it under the floorboards where he found it. He had the Stainless Steel .308 Browning A-Bolt with the BOSS unit, a synthetic stock and a Leupold scope for hunting. He had 10 boxes of 20 rounds each of Federal SPBT 190 gr. Hunting Rounds that his gunsmith shipped with the gun. As usual, Roy knew the gunsmith had not only boresighted the gun, but had confirmed the zero personally at his 100yd indoor range and printed out the results from the chronograph listing the velocity at the muzzle, 100 and 300 yards as well as the estimated drop. Just to be on the safe side, Roy wanted to re-check the zero, since the scope might have been bumped during shipping. Roy picked out a suitable log, marked the center with a 1" dot from his kit, and paced off 100 yards. Roy realized that this could be an exercise in futility, since he didn't know the exact range, but he figured he was plus or minus 5 feet of 100 yards.

Roy just wanted to make sure the scope was close. He walked back to the cabin, uncased the Browning rifle, took out a box of ammo, noticed the boxes were all the same lot number - good thing to know, Roy would have to ask the gunsmith to set the rest of the case aside for him if it worked well. Roy loaded 5 rounds in the magazine, put a tarp and his shooting pad on the porch, put on his hearing protectors and shooting glasses, laid the rifle down and got into a good prone position. Roy flipped the covers off the scope, settled his body, then tensed slightly until he was in a perfect military prone position, lined up the sights to the target, then dialed the scope to maximum magnification, took off the safety and chambered a round. Roy got a final position, steadied the scope on the center of the dot, let out his breath, blew out half of it, and held it as he squeezed the trigger. The trigger broke like a glass rod, and Roy knew he hit the bullseye. Roy fired the other 4 rounds, and then checked his target. He had 5 rounds all on the 1 inch dot, and the first one was dead center bullseye.

He KNEW this gun was a shooter now. He was really impressed with the work the gunsmith had done. Not only had he perfectly bedded and fitted the stock to the receiver, but he had dialed in the trigger break, slicked the action of the bolt, and adjusted the BOSS unit to that particular round. This was almost as much fun as shooting a Phaser. Roy left the action open for the gun to cool down, then field stripped the gun, and ran a patch through the bore. The first oiled patch came out clean, so he stopped there and re-assembled the gun. When the gun was totally cool, he put it back in the case, Roy checked the sling the gunsmith packed with the gun, and noted it was a high-end neoprene sling with a built-in case for 5 additional rounds of ammo and the plastic ammo carrier that came in the ammo box. Roy thought that was a nice touch, since those 5 extra rounds could come in handy.

Since he was done goofing around for the day, Roy figured it would be a good idea to fell some more trees for firewood, so he donned his safety gear, grabbed the chainsaw, helmet and gloves, then filled the chainsaw. When the saw was full, he grabbed the dollies, dragged them over to the stand of hardwood about 50 yards away from the cabin, then selected the trees he wanted to convert to firewood. He made sure to choose trees that were smaller than the rest, since he needed to save the bigger trees for building projects or other stuff. He spotted a large stand of 8 inch trees that were about 20-30 feet tall, with fairly straight trunks. Roy thought that if he dropped half of them, it would just about give him enough wood for the winter. Roy cleared the debris from around the right side of the stand, and planned to drop all the trees into the clearing in front of them that he had created by his previous logging efforts. Roy put on his gloves and helmet, and fired up the chainsaw, after letting it idle for a minute, Roy started cutting down trees like a beaver on speed. In a couple of hours, he had felled almost half of the stand of trees, so he moved to the downed trees to de-limb them. First he slipped a log under the trunk to keep the saw blade from hitting the dirt, then started cutting off branches, and was left with a 25 foot log about 8 inches in diameter. Roy piled the branches off to one side, then started the next log. Roy made quick work of de-limbing the trees, and started loading them into the dolly 3 at a time since they were so small. Roy secured them with a chain that was attached to the dolly for this purpose, then slid the harness over his shoulders, and pulled the trees over to his sawhorse next to the cabin. Roy pulled the rest of the trees to the cabin 3 at a time in about 10 trips, then he picked up his saw, gloves and helmet, and carried them over to the cabin. It was starting to get late, so Roy decided to cut the trees into logs tomorrow, and set the saw and his gear inside the cabin, and looked around outside to make sure everything was OK, then he went inside for the evening.

Roy made dinner, washed his dishes, took a bath and changed clothes, then sat down and went over his emergency gear, double checking everything, then sharpened his knives and hatchet and wiped them with a silicone impregnated cloth. Roy then took the rest of his jerky out of the box, and put it in a Ziploc bag. Then he filled up his canteen and Camelback container at the sink. Roy was now ready for hunting. He'd bring his day bag, shoulder holster, Browning A-Bolt .308 Rifle, and push the cart just in case. He had the cart set up to either push unloaded or lightly loaded, or to pull with the harness he also used for the dollies as a wheeled travois, which was much easier than when he used the 2 sapling method. Roy read his Bible for a while, then went to bed, because he wanted to be up early to go hunting.

Chapter 12 - Hunting Alone

Roy awoke the next morning, got dressed quickly and ate breakfast, then picked up and arranged all his gear, then picked up his rifle, connected the sling with 5 spare rounds for a total of 10 rounds on hand, put his shoulder holster, day bag and fanny pack on, opened the door, looked around to make sure all the fires were out, and closed the door. Roy took a compass bearing eastward toward his hunting preserve, and started off. Roy couldn't go so fast, since he had the cart with him, but he figured he'd make faster time on the way back to make up for it. Even though he was hunting for meat, Roy was going to bring the whole animal back if he could since Oliver would appreciate the food. Speaking of which, Roy whistled for Oliver, but got no response - maybe Oliver was too far away to hear. Oh well, Roy could hunt by himself just as well, it was nice to have Oliver around to let him know if there were any bears around, or other large predators. Roy barely made his first campsite by night fall, set up a lean-to using his tarp and a stick, made a fire and ate a piece of jerky, then went to sleep.

First thing the next morning, Roy was up and packing - he had a long way to go. Roy reached the spot where he last saw the moose, and he couldn't believe his luck, a HUGE bull moose was standing not more than 100 yards away eating grass. Roy set everything down, unslung his rifle, got into a good prone position, quietly cycled the bolt and took off the safety, remembered to lift the scope caps, got a good sight on the moose, dialed up the scope to max, then aimed at the moose's heart, slowly let half his breath out then held it as the scope stood right over the moose's heart, and squeezed the trigger. There was a large bang, and the moose dropped like a ton of bricks. The rest of the moose spooked at the noise, but Roy had what he wanted. He put the safety on the rifle and unloaded it, and went back to pick up his stuff and the cart. Roy wheeled the cart right up to the moose, slid a rope around the moose's chest, and using a small come-along winched the moose onto the cart. When the moose was all the way on, he grabbed the front edge of the cart, and hauled down on it until it was level, then moved the moose carcass further up the cart, until it balanced without him touching it. he left the rope attached to keep the moose positioned, then threw everything but his fanny pack and shoulder holster onto the cart, slid the harnesses over his shoulders, and picked up the cart to head for home.

Roy made it back to his camp just as it was getting dark, so Roy decided to skip the lean-to and build a big fire. Roy ate another piece of jerky then got up and drank from the Camelback until he was full, then sacked out and went to sleep. The next morning, Roy started walking home, and made it just before dark. Roy slid the whole cart into the smokehouse for safe keeping, and decided to butcher and skin it the next morning, and carried the rest of the stuff inside the cabin. Roy was glad to notice that nothing had been disturbed while he was gone, and started a fire in the fireplace. He ate dinner and went to bed because he was Tired.

Chapter 13 - Oliver the Mooch

The next morning, Roy got up and dressed so he could take care of the moose before it got warm out. He cleaned off the table, got his knife and hatchet handy, then opened the cabin door, and Oliver was standing there. Roy thought that was odd, then remembered Oliver had probably smelled the moose from his den. Roy thought “Yeah now you show up, but where were you when I had to drag this heavy carcass back here.” Roy opened the door the rest of the way, and Oliver followed him out to the smokehouse. Roy opened the door, and Oliver was practically drooling with anticipation.

Roy wheeled the cart outside, realized he had enough room on the cart to butcher the moose right there, so he wouldn't have to move it again, so he tipped the cart so the moose's head was down, and slit its throat. Blood came gushing out, and Oliver gossed out Roy by lapping up all of it. When the moose was good and bled out, Roy took his Ulu/hatchet and slit the moose open from the throat to the sex organs. Peeling back the skin, Roy made an incision into the abdominal cavity to gut the moose, and started piling up the guts for Oliver. Oliver turned toward the woods, “woofed” once, and Roy saw Francine and the pups. “Dinner for 6, Do you have a reservation? Luckily we have café seating available. Please be seated, your waiter will be along shortly.” Oliver stared hungrily at Roy, and Roy said, “OK Oliver, chows on.” and plopped the moose guts on the ground next to Oliver, but a safe distance away from the moose itself. The rest of the family trotted over and started eating. The pups ate a little meat, but Francine and Oliver pigged out. Roy thought the pups weren't fully weaned yet, so they weren't hungry, but it was obvious that Francine and Oliver could use the food. Roy only kept the choice pieces of meat for himself, and basically gave Oliver and Francine as much as they could eat.

Roy took the leg quarters, and the rib meat into the cabin to finish them later, skinned out the moose, and cracked its skull to brain tan the hide. When he was finished with the carcass, Roy wheeled what was left away from the cabin a safe distance, and dumped the carcass on the ground. Roy thought that Oliver and Francine would take care of any useable meat he missed. He walked inside to strip the meat into sections to jerk it, then took the Teriyaki marinade powder Jim had brought with him from his last trip, and mixed it into the meat, then he took it outside to hang inside the smokehouse. When Roy had the smokehouse full, he started a fire and closed the door. Roy took the scraps and walked over to Francine and Oliver, and added them to the pile. Both Francine and Oliver were stuffed to the gills, and were lying on their sides. The pups were getting their share now as they nursed from Francine. Roy thought about that, and walked back into the cabin, and brought out Oliver's old water bowl, and filled it with water from his canteen. Oliver rolled over, and drank the whole thing dry, so Roy refilled the canteen at the sink, then filled the bowl again so Francine could get a drink. She lifted her head enough to drink while the pups continued to nurse, and she too emptied the bowl, but it took longer. When he was finished, Roy grabbed a big water container, and washed off the cart where it was far away from the cabin. Roy left it there to dry overnight, and went back inside.

He put up all his stuff, cleaned his knives, drank a bunch of water, then remembered he had all those logs he needed to cut into stove and fireplace lengths then split. Roy got up, put on his safety gear, grabbed the chain saw, and checked out front, but Francine and Oliver were nowhere to be found. Roy thought maybe they had dragged their full bellies off to the den since they had the pups with them. Roy walked over to where he had stored the gasoline and oil, and filled the chainsaw up, then carried it to the sawhorse, where he had a log already waiting for him. Roy put on his helmet and gloves, and started the chainsaw, waited for it to warm up, then started cutting the logs into 1 foot sections. A couple of hours later, he had all the logs cut into sections, so he set the chainsaw down to cool, took off all his gear except the leg/shoe protectors, and picked up the splitting maul, set a log onto the stump, and split it into 2 pieces with one blow. Roy kept this up until he ran out of room, then started stacking wood around the back and side of the cabin. Roy was mostly stacking on the side now since he had the back area full of wood. Later, he'd have to rebuild the windbreak around the front of the cabin. Roy hoped the new room would also act as a windbreak, so maybe this year, he wouldn't have to dig out so often. Roy finished splitting the wood shortly before dark, so he piled what he had left, picked up his stuff, and went indoors for the evening. Later that night, he heard wolves howling, it started as a solo, then a lovely duet, then the Choir joined in. What the pups lacked in volume and experience, they made up with enthusiasm. They kept it up for almost 20 minutes, then silence resumed. Roy wasn't sure what to make of the serenade, but it sure was pretty. Roy read his Bible, then went to sleep, dreaming of wolves.

Chapter 14 - Roy and the Garden

When Roy got up, he ate a leisurely breakfast of oatmeal with cinnamon and raisins, drank a cup of coffee, and went outside to do his chores after strapping on his shoulder holster and fanny pack - after the scare with the bear, he wasn't going ANYWHERE unarmed again. Roy walked around back, looked at the woodpile, thought he was about halfway through what he would need for the winter, then remembered he'd also need wood between now and then. Roy realized he would have to fell the other half of that stand that he cut down the other day, then have to start looking for small hardwood trees even further from his cabin, well maybe he should leave the wood where it was, and start chopping it further away right now. Roy walked over to the garden, and noticed that things were starting to sprout. He also saw some incriminating bunny tracks around the fence. Roy would set some small traps like a Connibear 110 around the garden to take care of that. Roy thought about the pups, then realized they weren't attracted to the garden, so they'd be safe. Roy turned the water on to flood the ditches, then diverted the water as the center filled up. Roy knew he'd have to start weeding as soon as the weeds started popping up, but the good news was if the weeds were edible, he'd have some early greens. "Waste not, Want not" was one of his father's favorite sayings. When the garden was thoroughly watered, Roy shut off the water and went back to the cabin.

Roy picked up the chainsaw, donned his safety clothing, picked up his gloves, helmet and the dollies, and walked over to the gas and oil to top off the chainsaw. Roy also inspected the chainsaw for any wear or parts that needed tightening, and was amazed the chain was still extremely sharp. Whatever they made these chains out of was way better than the stuff they'd used 10 years ago. Roy brushed the debris off the housing and cooling fins of the chainsaw, then picked up everything and dragged the dollies past his usual tree lot, looking for another stand of small hardwood trees. He found a small stand of 8-inch trees that would be easy to cut and split. He figured there were about 50 trees in all, and it would take him most of the day to cut them down and drag them over to the sawhorse. Roy put on his gloves and helmet, then cleared all the debris from around the trees, while planning how he was going to cut all those trees down without a lot of wasted effort. When he had his plan firmly set, he fired up the chainsaw, let it idle, and holding onto the brake, carried it to the first tree he was going to drop, dropped his face shield into place, released the brake, revved the motor, and started cutting down trees. Since they were much smaller than the big trees he had cut down to build his room addition, it didn't take long to drop them all into a pile and start de-limbing them. Roy piled the branches into 2 piles, one he would later cut up for kindling, and one he would let decompose to keep the forest healthy. Roy lifted the logs onto the dollies, stacking them onto it 3 at a time, cinched them down, then dragged them over to the sawhorse.

Later that afternoon, he had them all dragged over to the sawhorse, and Roy decided it was time to go fishing. He set the chainsaw on the porch to cool, took off all his protective clothing, put on his shoulder holster and fanny pack, grabbed his fishing rod, and headed to the lake. Passing by his garden, Roy saw even more suspicious looking rabbit tracks, and reminded

himself to call the Mayor when he got home. Roy hiked North to his new fishing spot since the one close to the cabin wasn't producing right now, set his tackle box down, and turned around to look for that pesky bear. Roy didn't see him, but that didn't mean he wasn't around. Roy baited the hook, and cast it far out into the lake, and hooked another large fish. He dragged it right in, saw it was a lake trout, so he unhooked it, put it on his stringer, and set it in the water, then baited the hook again. Roy caught 3 10-pound lake trout in about ½ hour, and was just about to go home, when he looked up, and saw a flash of fur. Roy dropped everything in his hands, drew the Colt Anaconda, and not more than 40 yards was what appeared to be the same bear. Roy thought this bear was either very brave or very stupid, but he wasn't going to take a chance, and as soon as the bear reared up, Roy thumbed back the hammer, put the sights right on the bear's heart and pulled the trigger. The gun roared and the barrel twisted skyward, but Roy hung on, and as soon as he got the gun under control, lined up to take a second shot, but the bear was on the ground and not moving.

As soon as Roy's breathing returned to normal, he walked over to the bear and realized his first round had punched right through the bear's heart and he was deadlier than a doornail. Roy knew he was going to need the cart and the come-along to get this bear home, so he walked back to the lake, picked up his stringer of fish, rod and tackle box and walked home as quickly as he could. He hung the stringer in the smokehouse, grabbed the cart with the come-along, and quickly retraced his steps to the bear. Roy set the cart as close to the bear as he could, looped the strap from the come-along around the bear's chest, and tilted the cart to slide the body up the cart, then started cranking on the come-along. An hour later, Roy had it on the cart and balanced, and hooked up the harness so he could pull the cart back to the cabin. About halfway to the cabin, Roy noticed he had company, but recognizing Oliver, Francine and the pups, he figured all was well and they just wanted the leftovers. When he got to the cabin, Roy went inside to get a big drink of water, went to use the outhouse, washed his hands back inside the cabin, then came back outside to skin and gut the bear. Roy took his Ulu/hatchet and opened the bear from neck to butt, then opened the abdominal cavity, removed the contents, set them on the ground for Oliver's family who had gotten much more trusting since the last time, trotted right over and dug in. Even the cubs were eating this time. Roy figured that they must be weaned by now, and would be eating regular food. Once he gutted the bear, Roy skinned it, then smashed open the skull and brain tanned the hide. Again Roy saved the claws then threw the hide onto the smokehouse to dry. Instead of butchering the bear inside the cabin, Roy cut the largest hunks of meat off the bear, and removed the bear fat in case he needed it for candles this winter. When he had removed all the meat he had wanted, Roy dragged the cart over to where he had dumped the moose carcass, noticed that the moose was just a pile of bones now, and added the bear to the pile then he rinsed off the cart to get the blood and guts off it.

Roy left the cart on the porch to dry off, and went inside to slice the bear meat into pieces suitable to smoke and jerk. When he had all the bear meat sliced, Roy added another packet of Teriyaki Marinade mix to the meat, mixed it thoroughly, then hung it to dry in the smokehouse after taking the fish down and cleaning them. Roy smoked 2 of the fish, and decided to have the 3rd for dinner - Roy liked fried fish. Roy fed the pile of fish guts to Oliver's family, who by

now resembled Porky Pig. Even the pup's bellies were so big they looked like they would explode. As long as the pups could make it until they were a year old, they would be OK since they could hunt as a pack when they were about a year old. In the meantime, Roy would help out wherever he could - especially since he didn't like the taste of Bear or fish guts. When he'd made dinner, Roy said grace, thanked God everything had turned out OK, and asked a special blessing on Oliver's family that all the pups would survive, and they would make it through the winter. Roy sat down to a dinner of fried lake trout and mashed potatoes. When he was finished, he cleaned his dishes, took a bath, and got changed. Then he read his Bible and went to sleep.

The next morning, Roy ate breakfast, then donned his safety gear to go out and cut up those trees into logs. He carried the chainsaw over to the gas and oil, topped it off, then walked over to the sawhorse, put the first tree into the sawhorse with about a foot sticking out, dropped his face shield, and started the chainsaw. Since he had done a lot of this, Roy soon had a large pile of logs, and decided not to split these, since he needed medium logs to keep the fire burning overnight, and these were the right size. By now, Roy had most of the side and back of his house stacked with logs and split wood, so now he could start rebuilding his windbreak in front of the house. Roy set the chainsaw down on the porch to cool, took off his safety gear, strapped on his shoulder holster and fanny pack, checked the hides, and realized the moose hide needed to be rinsed, so he took it down and rolled it up to rinse it in the lake when he went fishing. Roy remembered to pick up his pole and tackle box so he wouldn't have to come back when he was done watering the garden. Roy thought about that and grabbed a small container of raw bear fat to dab on the chicken wire fence hoping the smell would drive off the garden robbers. Roy walked to the garden, turned the valve on to start watering, and smeared bear fat midway up the fencing all around the garden, then came back and diverted the water to the outside of the garden, then repeated the process. Roy washed the bear fat off his hands while he had the water running, then shut it off, and picked up his stuff and headed to the lake.

Roy rinsed off the moose hide near his drying rack he made when he was first stranded over a year ago - Was it over a year already? Roy was shocked to realize his 1 year anniversary had come and gone, as well as his and Susan's wedding anniversary, and it had been almost 2 years since Susan's death. When he had finished washing the moosehide, he spread it over the drying rack, and walked North to his latest fishing grounds. Roy baited the hook, cast it out, and sat down to wait. While he waited, he had a chance to reflect on his life. Roy wasn't happy remembering his past, but the times with Susan made up for it. Roy felt a jerk on his rod, and looked up to see the tip bobbing like one of those bobble-head dogs in the back of some cars. Roy set the hook, and started reeling in but found the going rough, and landed a very large lake trout. Roy put it on his stringer, then re-baited the hook, and tossed it back out. Roy started thinking about Susan again, and soon he had another big fish on the line. Roy didn't realize it, but he kept dropping his lure into a large school of lake trout that were actively feeding near shore on some minnows. Roy finally quit when he had 4 large lake trout on his stringer. On his way back to the cabin, he picked up the moosehide, which was mostly dry, and carried it back to the cabin. When he got in, he put the skin back up on the smokehouse, rebuilt the fire inside,

closed the door, gutted, and filleted the fish, keeping one for dinner, and smoked the rest. By now the smokehouse was full. When he had cleaned up, Roy decided to give the Mayor a call, and turned on the radio, which was already set to the mayor's frequency. "Roy calling the Mayor on 462.525 - mayor you there, over?"

A few minutes later, the Mayor came on the line, "Roy it's me, what do you need, over?"

Roy told the mayor what had transpired the last week or so since he had talked to him. The mayor said they had a fur buyer in town that could give him \$100 for the moose hide and \$500 for the bearskin if they were preserved right. Roy explained that he had brain tanned and rinsed them both, then allowed them to air dry. The mayor told Roy that it sounded like they were in good shape, and he would take care of the transaction for him if he wanted to give them to Jim when he made his run in two days, and post the money to his credit union account. Roy gave the mayor a list of the stuff he wanted to buy, and the mayor told Roy they would be on the next trip. Roy asked the mayor to call his gunsmith and ask him to reserve the rest of that case of .308 ammo, and to ship him another 100 rounds each of the .308 and his .44 Magnum JHP hand loads when he could. Roy signed off and turned off the radio, then cranked on the hand crank generator for 5 minutes to recharge the battery, and put the whole thing up. When Roy got off the radio, he decided to make fried fish for dinner, fired up the wood stove, heated a cast iron skillet, added the grease he had been reusing from the last couple of times, breaded the fish with flour and cornmeal, added salt pepper and some other seasonings, then when the oil was good and hot, slid the fillets in to fry. Roy turned them over when they were golden brown, and slid them onto a plate when they were finished. While the fish was frying, Roy made a small batch of instant mashed potatoes, and served it next to the fish. Roy said grace, and ate his dinner. After dinner, Roy cleaned his dishes, took a bath, and went to sleep.

Roy spent the whole next day sawing wood and piling it in front of the cabin to start his windbreak. He took a break to water the garden, and saw no more bunny tracks; he hoped the bear grease was working. When it got dark, Roy went inside, washed his hands, and opened a can of corned beef hash, and fried it in the cast iron skillet. After dinner, he cleaned up and read for a while, then went to bed early since Jim was supposed to be flying in some stuff for him first thing in the morning.

Chapter 15 - Jim makes another Delivery

Roy was up with the sun the next morning, ate breakfast, then waited patiently (yeah right.) for Jim to show up. “It figures, the first time I’m up early - Jim’s Late.” Roy grouched. He sat down to read his Bible while he waited, and soon he heard the roar of an airplane. He put his Bible down, and went out the door of the cabin to wait, then remembered the skins, took them off the smokehouse roof and rolled them up. He finished just as Jim taxied up. He turned around with the skins in hand, walked to the plane as soon as Jim had stopped the propeller and opened the door, and handed Jim the skins, who then put them in the back of his plane and then shook Roy’s hand. “Roy, how are you doing - I see you shot a huge bear recently.”

“Jim, I tell you, that same Bear came nosing around my fishing spot last week, and I drew that Colt Anaconda you gave me, but he sat back down and left before I had to shoot. A couple of days ago, I decide to go fishing at the same spot, and guess who shows up? Right as I was packing up to go home, Mr. Bear decided to make an appearance. I figured this bear wasn’t going to back down twice, so I drew the revolver, cocked the hammer, and as soon as he stood up and growled, I shot him. I managed to nail him in the heart, but it was basically a lucky shot. I don’t remember any .44 Magnum I shot recoiling that much - what gives?”

“Roy, you shooting factory ammo or Reloads?”

“The box the gunsmith sent me was a box of hot reloads, but I didn’t think they’d be that hot.”

“Your gunsmith probably knew a thing or two about bears, and your Colt Anaconda - It’s got a strong enough frame to handle +p loads even out of a .44 Magnum, but I wouldn’t want to shoot a lot of them through it.”

“Well Jim, I’ll tell you - that round definitely worked. I’ll make sure to thank the gunsmith.”

“Even better would be to spread the word around Allakaket that this gunsmith knew his business, and knew how to load ammo for Alaska - he’d make 10 times what he invested with you in future business.”

“Thanks Jim, that’s an excellent idea, now let’s unload the plane, and maybe I can interest you in a cup of coffee?”

“OK, I’ve got the time since I only have to make 2 other stops, and they’re on my way home.”

With that, they quickly unloaded the plane. Roy had bought several cases of food, some other supplies, and some tools and screws for building shelves for his second room - he’d gotten tired of picking stuff up every time he needed something. He was looking at Jim with a strange look, because it looked like Jim had the Mayor’s generator, a Skill saw, and an electric drill to boot.

When He asked Jim, he told Roy that the mayor wasn't using it, and it would make building shelves much faster. Jim was right about that. He'd have to remember to thank the mayor next time he saw him. Jim handed Roy a large snow shovel and a pair of Tubbs snowshoes that were the right size for him with integral short ice crampons so he wouldn't fall down when he stepped on the ice. When they got the plane unloaded, Roy and Jim went inside his cabin, and Roy had a pot of water boiling on the woodstove for water.

"Roy, the place seems bigger than the last time I was here?"

"I made it almost twice as big by adding a second room - I didn't have enough room to store all the stuff I had, so I added another room."

"Ok - I see now - good idea building it against the existing wall. I guess that was what all those lag bolts and washers were for."

"Right, and I put them in by hand."

"That must have taken a long time. Next time you need to do something like that, let me know, and I'll ship the mayor's generator and drill up to you."

"OK Jim, but I doubt there will be a next time - I'm done renovating this cabin."

As Jim looked around, he noticed the sink, turned the faucet on, and got steaming hot water.

"Yikes, that water is HOT. You've got hot and cold running water? How'd you do that?"

"It's only until winter, then everything freezes. I'm piping water from the lake to water the garden, so I just extended the line out to the cabin and added another pump. They're solar powered, and I've got a 50 gallon captive air tank to maintain pressure so it doesn't need to run every time I open a tap. I hope you can help me blow out the pipes this fall so the pipes don't freeze."

"I might be able to bring something up this fall, how big is the pipe?"

"I used ½" PVC, and there is a little over 300 feet total, but we can blow it out in two stages thanks to the gate valves."

"I've got a friend that's a diver, and I might be able to borrow his tanks, and a homemade adapter I made for blowing out pipes. Seems a lot of people just pack up and leave during the winter, and pay good money to get their pipes blown dry so they don't freeze."

"Jim, I'm sure that will work great, but Coffee's Ready - how do you like it?"

"Just give it to me black."

They sat down and enjoyed the coffee for a while before either one said anything. Finally Jim asked Roy what happened to Oliver. Roy told him that Oliver had a family now, and 4 growing pups. Jim was glad to hear that since he thought that Wolves belong in the wild. When they finished the coffee, Jim got up to leave. Roy stood, opened the door, and offered his hand, which Jim shook. Jim reminded Roy that it would be 2 weeks until his next trip unless he had an emergency. Roy thanked him, and Jim walked out to the plane, started it and taxied off to the lake, then turned into the wind and took off.

Roy had a lot to do, and plenty of daylight left, so he thought that since the Mayor had been kind enough to loan him the tools, he should build the shelves right now. He needed lumber to make shelves and supports, which meant he needed to drop a large hardwood tree, and he knew just the one. He went inside, put on his safety gear, picked up the chainsaw, walked it over to the gas and oil, and topped it off. He carried the chainsaw and dragged the dollies over to a large hardwood tree a little over 50 yards away from the cabin that he had spotted when he was building the second room, but didn't need the wood. The area around it was already clear, the trunk was just less over 2 feet in diameter, so it was safe to cut, and he had a cleared spot to drop it in. He set down the chainsaw, put on his gloves and helmet, primed the carb, and pulled the starter cord. On the second pull, the chainsaw started with a roar, so He engaged the chain brake, and let the engine idle for a minute to warm up while he got situated. Since this was a big tree, He would have to work fast, and move fast to stay out of its way as it came down. When the saw was warmed up, He dropped his visor, revved the motor, picked up the chainsaw and released the brake.

Roy made the first wedge cut, then cut the wedge out, then quickly moved over to the other side to cut through to the wedge. As he finished his final cut, He heard a cracking noise, and quickly pulled the chainsaw out, grabbed the chain brake, and stepped back quickly to a safe distance as the massive tree fell. It made cracking noises all the way down, then landed with a "Whump". He looked up to make sure no branches were hung up that might come down on him, then walked over to the tree, and started de-limbing it. Since it was so big, there was little chance of the saw blade hitting the ground, and it was too big to lift. He had the tree de-limbed within an hour, and was rolling it onto the dollies. When he had the log onto the dollies, He walked the chainsaw over to the porch to cool off, then took off his gloves and helmet and set them next to the chainsaw, and walked back over to the tree to drag it over to the sawhorse.

Roy got the tree over to the sawhorse about 2 hours later, and sat down to drink a bunch of water. By now the chainsaw was cool to the touch, and He got out the planking attachment and attached it to the chainsaw, then put his safety gear back on including his gloves and helmet, double checked the planking attachment, set it for a shallow setting to de-bark the tree with minimal wood loss, and started the chainsaw, and quickly de-barked the tree. He re-set the planking attachment to make 2-inch planks, and started cutting. The tree was about 30 feet tall, and he wanted 10 ft planks, so he could get 3 planks per pass. After 2 passes, he shut off the saw and re-set the depth to 6 inches for the supports, and made 2 passes. He turned off the saw, let it cool, and then took off the planking attachment. He was stacking these planks on logs as

he cut them, so he took his tape measure, and measured 10 feet, and cut the 2 planks into 10 foot lengths, then cut the 6 inch planks into 8-foot lengths (which was the height of the wall) and stacked them.

Roy set the chainsaw down, got the Mayor's generator out and the large Skill saw with a worm drive and a 14-inch blade, and set the fence for a 6-inch cut. He fired up the generator, plugged in the extension cord, then plugged in the saw. He took the saw over to the stack of 6 inch thick planks, locked the rip guide in place, put his visor down, set the Skill saw at the edge of the plank, and pulled back the trigger on the saw. When the saw was up to speed, He slowly fed the blade into the wood, running the full length of the plank to rip a 6x6 inch post off the plank. Roy repeated the process 3 more times, and then set the next 2 planks up on the sawhorses. He had 16 6x6 8-ft long posts to support the shelves, and enough shelves to do floor to ceiling shelving on the back wall with 18 inches between shelves. He might make some shelves taller, after he saw how tall some of the stuff was, but he thought 18 inches would work. Before he made any more cuts, He decided to measure everything in the 2nd room, and how big the stuff was that he wanted on the shelves. He measured everything, decided what he wanted on the shelves, and then figured 18 inches between shelves would be more than enough. With 16 6x6 posts, the shelf would probably support a Mack Truck. Roy set the saw for a 2 inch depth of cut, and marked out 2 inch notches every 18 inches starting at the very bottom of the 6x6 posts. He thought it would go much faster if he did the posts 2 at a time, so he marked one and cut 2 posts at a time. He would have a 5-shelf wall-to-wall storage shelf, with a little room on the top. When he finished notching the posts, Roy measured in 2 inches, and taking a 2 inch wood chisel and a mallet, knocked the notch out of the posts. He looked in his bag of screws, and just as he suspected, the mayor was thinking ahead, and gave him a bunch of 3/8 x 12-in lag bolts to bolt the shelf to the wall. He grabbed 2 posts and his level, went into the 2nd room, which he had cleared out to give him enough room to work, stuck one of the posts in the corner, made sure it was plumb, then drilled 2 3/16" pilot holes through the post and into the log behind, then chucking the nut driver assembly into the drill, drove the lag bolts into the wall. He measured every 1.25 feet, and made a mark where the next support post should go, then went outside and brought in 6 more posts to complete the back wall. When he was finished, He had 8 posts along the 10 foot back wall lag bolted into the logs. Roy brought in the bottom shelf, set it on the floor, then grabbed the next shelf, maneuvered it carefully into position, and quickly set up the 2 front corner posts to help hold up the shelving. Once he had that in, the rest of the shelves slid right into place with a lot of grunting and groaning. When he had it all assembled, He took the drill and the 1/8 drill bit, and drilled pilot holes into the posts where the notches were cut to screw the posts to the shelves. He secured every other shelf this way, alternating shelves, so each shelf was connected to at least every other post using 8-inch screws.

When he was finished, Roy swept off the dirt and sawdust off the shelves, and started stacking stuff on the shelves. He put the heaviest stuff on the bottom, and all the foodstuffs together and over by the stove. He slid the 5-gallon cans of kerosene out from under his bed, and put them in the corner farthest away from the stove. Roy put the lanterns and wicks towards the top of the shelves. He had a bunch of gardening tools and stuff that was too big to fit on the shelves, so he

thought he would make a tool corral to hold them in the far corner of the room. When Roy was done, he had a bunch of floor space that was suddenly freed up. He thought it might be an idea to order some 5 gallon water containers with spigots for the winter and a porta-potty just to be safe in case he got snowed in. He had enough wood storage to last a week, but he didn't think he could hold it that long. By the time he was finished, it was starting to grow dark, so he decided to call it a day, and cut wood for the fireplace and stove tomorrow. Roy re-lit the fire in the stove, put on a saucepan, added a can of Spaghetti-O's, and when it was done, spooned it into a bowl, said grace and ate dinner. Later, He cleaned up the mess he had made, washed his dishes, took a bath, read his Bible, and went to bed.

Chapter 16 - Roy does his Chores

The next morning, Roy ate breakfast, and got started on a long list of chores. First thing, he cleaned and rearranged the cabin. When he was finished inside, he put on his Kevlar pants and jacket, slipped on his Kevlar leg protectors with the shoe protectors, grabbed the chainsaw, his helmet and his Kevlar gloves. Roy wanted to cut down that section of woods he had started earlier, so he picked up the harness attached to his dollies, and dragged them out the cabin door. He set everything but the chainsaw down, took it over to the gas and oil, topped it off, inspected the chain, and it was still almost as sharp as when he had bought it. He didn't understand, every chain he had bought before needed sharpening by now, but this one must have been made by Timex. He decided not to look a gift horse in the mouth, and carried the saw over to the stand of trees he wanted to cut down, then went back to get the rest of his stuff. He cleared the debris from around the stand of 12 inch hardwoods, put on his gloves and his helmet, made sure the attached ear muffs were positioned properly, dropped the visor, and started the chainsaw.

After letting the engine idle for a few minutes, Roy tweaked the throttle, released the brake, and started cutting the trees down. A couple of hours later, he had a nice high stack of downed trees. He started de-limbing the trees that were on the top, and sorted the burnable wood from the stuff that was too small to bother with. When he was finished, he loaded the logs 3 at a time onto the dollies, and hauled them over to the sawhorse. Roy looked around at the stand of trees he had cleared, and realized he had created another clearing. He thought that was probably how the clearing around the cabin came to be, since it looked like this area was old-growth except for the trees right around the cabin, that couldn't have been more than 10-20 years old. He carried the chainsaw over to the sawhorse, put his helmet and gloves back on, stuck the first log into the sawhorse, fired up the chainsaw, and quickly cut it into 1 foot sections. He kept this up for the rest of the afternoon, stacking logs in his front windbreak as he ran out of room. He had a nice windbreak by this time, as high as the roof of the cabin and twice as wide as it was high. Roy took off his safety gear, left the chainsaw to cool on the porch, slipped into his shoulder holsters, grabbed his tackle box and fishing rod, and headed for the garden to water it.

When he got there, he didn't see any more rabbit tracks, so that was good news. He checked the plants, and they were starting to send up shoots. In a couple more days, he'd need to thin the carrots and other root vegetables to give them enough room. Roy watered the garden twice, then turned the water off and headed to the lake. He hiked north to his fishing spot, set down the tackle box, baited his hook, and threw it way out into the lake. Roy let the line settle, then sat down to wait. He didn't have to wait long, and the rod tip started twitching, so He set the hook. The fight was on, and halfway through, Roy felt the line part. "DAMN.. @#\$@#\$. Of all the @#\$@#\$. lousy things why now?" When he calmed down, Roy felt very bad, because he remembered all the tough scrapes he had got through, and if not for the grace of God, he would have been dead now. Roy fell to his knees, crying, saying how sorry he was. Roy was weeping, remorsefully confessing his weakness, and his need for God's grace and forgiveness.

Then the weirdest thing happened. As he was kneeling there crying, he felt a nudge on the thigh, when he looked over, he saw Oliver sitting there looking at him like “What’s Wrong Boss.” Roy wrapped his arms around Oliver’s neck and burst into tears. Oliver must have sensed Roy’s need for companionship, and sat down while Roy cried. He felt like a dam had burst within him, and he couldn’t hold back the tears. When he had cried himself out, he let go of Oliver, and Oliver licked his face, cleaning off his tears. This almost made him lose it again, but he was able to regain his composure. Roy then remembered a phrase, “Man’s Best Friend” He definitely agreed with that. When he had calmed down enough, Roy sat down and petted Oliver for a while, then Oliver’s ears perked up and his head turned. Roy’s eyes followed Oliver’s and saw Francine standing there with the pups. They all gathered around Roy and Oliver, and he played with the pups under Francine’s watchful gaze. Oliver laid down, thankful for the break. “What’s the matter Oliver, kids wearing you out?” The pups’ attention couldn’t be held long, and soon they started playing among themselves.

Roy had an idea, picked up his rod, cut about 20 feet off the line to make sure he had removed all the damaged line, tied a new swivel and hook onto the line, crimped a weight onto it, baited the hook, and cast it out into the lake. Shortly, he hooked into a large lake trout, when he landed it he gave it to Oliver and his family. As Oliver and family dug in, He cast the line again, and hooked another large fish. By the time he had finished reeling it in, they had finished the fish, and all that was left was the bones. He plopped the other fish in front of them, and turned to catch another fish. Roy knew it wasn’t a very good idea to feed the wolves, but he figured if all the pups made it to their first birthday and they were able to hunt as a pack, it would be worth it. When they finished the second fish, Oliver lead his family back into the woods, then turned around as if to say “So Long and Thanks for All the Fish.” then turned back around and trotted into the woods with his family, headed back to their den. He caught a couple more fish, then noticed it was getting dark, picked up his stringer and went home. It was almost full dark by the time he reached the cabin, so he put the fish in the smokehouse, picked up the chainsaw and dollies, put them back where they belonged, grabbed the fish, skinned and filleted them, and hung them in the smokehouse, and built another fire. Roy opened a can of Corned beef hash, lit a fire in the cook stove, set a skillet on the stove, and heated the hash. When it was finished, he put it on a plate, sat down to eat, then remembered to say Grace. He felt an indescribably wonderful peace, and then he ate dinner. After dinner, he cleaned up, took a sponge bath, then changed his clothes and sat down to read his Bible. Roy was reading in Revelation, and while he didn’t totally understand it, he knew Jesus would come back one day to claim those that were his, and He hoped he was in the chosen. He decided to kneel in prayer and re-dedicate himself to God. When he finished, he knew he was going to Heaven when he died. Roy knew it wasn’t going to be too much longer, he just turned 55.

Chapter 17 - Willy Make-it?

The next morning, Roy got up, ate breakfast, and put on all his safety gear, then grabbed the chainsaw to go cut down some more trees. He filled the chainsaw up, dragged the dollies out to a large stand of trees, and was going to get started when he saw a large tree that would give him as much wood as 10 of the smaller ones. He set down the saw and dollies, put on his gloves and helmet, fired up the saw, and after it idled for a few, carried it over to the big tree. It was over 18 inches across at the base, and was about 40 feet tall. As he started his first cut, he felt something was wrong, because the blade was binding. He didn't know it, but the tree was rotten, and he had just upset its balance. The tree started toppling with Roy right in its path. He let go of the saw, and tried to run out from under the tree, but tripped on an unseen root just under the surface. As Roy fell to the ground, he screamed "Jesus Save Me." because he knew he was right under the tree. The last thing he felt was a blow to the back like he was hit by a baseball bat, then darkness.

Roy woke up, felt like he was surrounded by a bright light. "Am I in Heaven?" he thought, then looking up, he saw Susan, but it couldn't be her - she looked like Susan when he first met her and fell in love. Her lips never moved, but he could hear her voice in his head, "Roy, you have to go back - you're not finished running the race yet. I'm watching over you, everything will be all right. You'll meet someone, but don't feel guilty if you fall in love, I want you to be happy in the time you have left, we'll be together for eternity when your time comes. We're all so proud of you and the progress you've made since you moved to Alaska - but don't backslide. My time is limited here, but I just wanted to tell you I Love You, and I'm happy and safe here. Goodbye for now my love."

Roy woke up with a throbbing headache, he tried to wiggle his toes and his fingers, but he couldn't move his left arm. He lifted his head up enough to look at his arm, and it appeared trapped under a branch. Roy wondered why he wasn't dead, then realized the branches must have broken the tree's fall so it didn't land directly on him. He carefully studied the branch, noticed it was too thin to support the tree, so if he could saw or break the branch, he could extricate himself. He knew his left arm was broken by the pain he felt, but was pretty sure he had nothing more than a concussion besides that. Roy looked around, but the saw was on the other side of the tree, out of reach. He felt around his pockets and belt, No Gerber tool. Finally, in his right front pocket, he felt a hard lump. He pulled it out and it was his Swiss Army knife - This was too good to be true. Saying a quick prayer of thanks, he opened the knife one-handed by holding the knife in his mouth, and pulling the saw blade out with his hand. He strained to get his right hand up to the branch where he could cut it off, and slowly sawed through the branch. After a couple of hours, Roy finally sawed through the branch. He was almost free. He folded the saw back up, stuck the SAK in his pocket, grabbed the branch, and pulled with all his might. Roy screamed from the pain of the branch dragging over his broken arm, but he had to get that branch off if he had any chance to survive. He gave another mighty tug, and the branch moved some more, but so did the tree. He would have to be careful, or he'd finish the

job himself. Roy tugged a little more carefully, and the branch moved, but the tree stayed still. He kept tugging, and slowly but surely, his arm came loose from the tree. Finally with one last tug, the branch moved enough to slide his broken arm out. Roy pulled his arm out, and he had never experienced such excruciating pain. He almost passed out, but slowly got to his knees, then to his feet, looked around to get his bearings, then holding his broken arm with his good arm, stumbled back to the cabin. He almost fell twice, and when he had to drop his broken arm to push the door open, he almost fainted again. As soon as he got inside the door, he grabbed a bandana and fashioned it into a sling, checked himself as best as he could, and except for some minor cuts and scratches, and one heck of a headache, he was feeling pretty good considering. Luckily, Roy had the battery fully charged for the radio, so he picked up the microphone, turned the transceiver on, keyed the mike and said “Mayday, Mayday, Mayday.” then released the mike.

Immediately, the radio operator in Allakaket came back, “Go Ahead Mayday, Read you Loud and Clear.”

Roy keyed the mike, “This is Roy Williams out at the HelpmeJacks, A tree fell on me, I have a broken left arm above the elbow and a concussion - I need a Medevac. Over.”

The Operator said “Roger, broken left arm and concussion - need Medevac. Are you stable?”

Evidently the operator wanted to know if this could wait, but Roy knew enough about concussions that he needed to at least see a doctor right away, and be kept under observation.

“Not Stable - need Medevac due to concussion, and possible open fracture above the elbow.”

“Roger, will contact Jim and the Clinic, Keep your radio on, and the frequency clear - We will call you back.”

Roy set the microphone down, and went to the sink to drink some water. He thought about some Advil, then remembered the rule, “No Meds until the doctor checks the concussion” since the meds could mask symptoms.

Half an hour later, the operator called back, “Allakaket Operator calling Roy, over.”

Roy grabbed the mike, keyed the mike and said, “This is Roy, Over.”

“Medevac will be there in two hours, Doc will be waiting at the clinic. Make yourself as comfortable as possible, but don’t take anything besides water.”

“Rodger 2 hours for Medevac, nothing but water, Over and out.”

Roy looked at his watch, and realized it would be dark by the time Jim got there with the plane.

Since his arm was broken, he couldn't carry anything, so he decided to leave everything in the cabin. Time dragged slowly by, and finally, He heard the roar of a plane, then a couple of minutes later, a thoroughly scared Jim came crashing into the cabin with a huge 6 D-cell Maglite. "Roy, you OK?" "Yeah, Jim, could you shut that light off - you're blinding me." Jim hustled over to his friend, lit a lantern, took a good look at Roy, walked over to the radio, and keyed the mike "Allakaket Operator, this is Jim, I'm at Roy's cabin, he's OK but he does have an apparent broken arm and he says his head hurts. I'm leaving now, will call when I'm on final into Allakaket. Over and out." Then Jim switched off the radio.

Jim carefully helped Roy up, asked if he needed anything, Roy told him to just leave it since he had a busted wing, and to get him into the plane. Jim walked Roy out the door, blew out the lantern, closed the door behind him, and helped him into the plane. Jim ran around to the other side, buckled Roy in, then turned the plane around and taxied out to the lake. He didn't waste any time getting into the air. He was worried Roy was going into shock, so he reached back, grabbed a blanket, and threw it over Roy. Jim flew as fast as he could to Allakaket, and called in from the plane's radio when he was on final approach, "Allakaket, On final - have the doc standing by with transport - he's going into shock." He blacked out as Jim touched down, partly from shock, and partly from pain. When he awoke, he was in the clinic, and the doc was bandaging his head, and setting his arm. He said, "I'd love to give you something for that arm, but with the concussion, I can't give you anything stronger than Advil."

Roy groggily replied, "OK whatever you say, Doc." and promptly passed out.

`Chapter 18 - A Stranger in a Strange Land

When Roy woke up in a strange room, he was very confused until someone noticed he was awake, and a pretty brunette got up from her chair, where she was reading a book, walked over to his bed, and introduced herself. “You might not remember me, but I’m Ron Fellow’s younger sister, Anne. You might remember my brother Steve - the doc. We decided you’d be more comfortable over here instead of in the one old 1950s style bed over at the clinic. Besides, you were OK except for a knock on the noggin and a busted wing. Steve should be by in an hour or so to check on you, in the meantime, if you need anything, I used to be an RN in Dallas TX. Roy’s head was swimming, so he decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and went back to sleep.

Roy woke to poking and prodding, and opened his eyes to see a 20-something year old man who looked vaguely familiar with a stethoscope around his neck. He said, “Hi, I’m Doctor Fellows, but my friends call me Doc.” Roy reached with his right hand to shake, and Steve accidentally bumped his cast, sending a wave of pain through Roy. Roy responded by involuntarily gripping Steve’s hand almost to the point of serious pain. Each rubbed their “owie” and Steve apologized. Then he told Roy “I have good news and bad news - the good news is the concussion was minor, but the bad news is you suffered a simple break of the left humerus which means you will be in a cast for 4 to 6 weeks. You’ll have to stay here for the first week, then you can go back to your cabin if you can get someone to stay with you. Since my older sister happens to be an RN, grew up around here, and also happens to be free for the next couple of months, I’d highly suggest you bring her with you. I’ll be back to check on you later today, then once a day for the rest of the week. I’ve prescribed Darvocet for the pain of that broken arm, and since your concussion has basically gone away, you can take one now. A word to the wise, Anne is capable of handling ornery patients, so my advice is to go along with her, and everyone will be much happier. With that Steve walked out of the room, and after a minute, Anne walked back in. Roy remembered her now - She was the pilot’s sister, who was the reporter that asked her all the questions about Ron. As she got near the bed, he said kind of sarcastically, “I thought you were a Reporter, not a Nurse.”

Anne bit her tongue, then decided to rise to the bait, “I am, I’m also a licensed RN in the state of Texas. I was living with my boyfriend, who was a Rodeo Clown, with the emphasis on Clown. I moved back here when I found him sleeping with his best friend’s girlfriend. I’ve been helping Steve out at the clinic. I love it here, but Steve is getting bored - he wants to join the Air Force and become a Para-rescue Jumper. Roy decided he wanted a Darvocet, and asked her for one. Anne came back with a horse pill and a plastic tumbler of water with a flexible straw. Roy took the pill from her hand, then she set the straw in his mouth, holding the cup for him. Roy drank the whole cup, then remembered he hadn’t been to the bathroom in a while. “I need to go.”

Anne told Roy that Steve said he wasn’t supposed to get out of bed for the first day or so until

his equilibrium returned, so she would bring a bedpan. Roy wasn't too happy at that idea, but basically had no choice. Anne carried the bedpan over to the bed, and with minimal embarrassment for either of them, positioned it so Roy could use it. Roy felt funny about a strange woman handling his plumbing, then remembered she was a nurse, and did this all the time. Roy groaned with relief, and when he was finished, she took the pan away. When she came back, she said that she was glad he was being so cooperative. Roy told her that her brother the doc told him he'd better cooperate or else. Anne laughed at that, and Roy smiled at her laughter. It reminded him of Susan's laughter when they were dating. Roy remembered Susan, and felt bad for a minute, then he remembered what she said while he was trapped under the tree, felt better, then said a quick "thank you" to Susan. Anne was sitting there for a second with a strange look on her face, then asked him what was wrong. Roy explained that her laughter reminded him of the way his wife used to laugh when they were dating. In response to her confused look, Roy elaborated by saying she died of Ovarian Cancer a few years ago, and he had been all alone since then in the cabin.

She said, "That's right, you were stranded in the crash that killed Ron." She saw Roy was crestfallen, and added "Don't feel bad, He died doing what he loved, and probably never felt a thing. Besides, when you found him, you gave him a decent burial, then risked your life running the river in a dugout canoe to let us know. You realize no one has done that since the 1800's. Someone tried it last year in a river raft and almost drowned. "

Roy sat there with his mouth hanging open, then decided to reply. "I'm no hero, I needed to get back to civilization for several reasons, one of which just happened to be that I wanted Ron's family to know what had happened to him. I didn't want to run that river, it was the lesser of 2 evils. It would have taken me 6 months to hike to a town, running the river took a couple of days."

Anne replied, "One of these days, you're going to have to tell me about it. But for now you need your rest. I'll bring you something to eat later. Roy conked out again as the pill took effect.

Chapter 19 - An Angel of Mercy

When Roy woke up, he was really hungry. Good thing Anne had anticipated that, and had a meal ready for him. She warmed it in the Microwave oven, then brought it in on a tray. They had brought in a Hospital Table while he slept, and Anne placed the tray on it, then wheeled it over to Roy. Since the only thing wrong with Roy was his left arm, the Doctor placed no restrictions on his diet, so Anne decided to feed him a meat and potatoes diet to get his energy back up. Dinner was Pot Roast, and as Roy hungrily waited, Anne cut it into bite-sized pieces so Roy could feed himself. Roy was thankful that it wasn't his right arm that was broken, because he was almost 100% right-handed. When she finished, Anne tilted the head of the bed up, and slid the table in front of him. Roy remembered to say grace, and Anne looked at him praying with a smile on her face. "I guess that explains why you could have a 10 ton tree fall on you and get out from under it with only a busted wing and a headache. I'm not very religious myself, but I don't knock it either."

Roy decided to talk to her instead of letting that comment pass. "You know Anne, I've had too many close calls in the last 2 years that turned out OK to call it luck - I really feel God is watching out for me, and I know where I'm going if I die - do you?" Anne kind of shook her head and then hung her head. Roy told her they could talk about this later when he could think straight and he had his Bible handy. Then Anne dropped a bombshell on Roy.

"Steve asked me to stay with you for a couple of months - you are going to need someone to keep an eye on you and help out while you recover, then you're going to need some physical therapy and rehab for that arm. It's going to take a couple of months to get your arm back in shape until you can be left alone out there. In the big city, we could cut you loose after the cast came off, but out here, you need help until the arm is 100%. Jim's going to help me set up a cot in your second room for me, and we can put a divider in your door opening for privacy when we need to take baths."

Roy's eyes got as big as saucers, and his chin was trying to hit the floor. He'd never even thought about another woman until now, and all of a sudden Anne wants to move in with him. Roy quickly realized it wasn't going to be that kind of relationship, and he calmed down a little, but still he liked his privacy, and the solitude. On the other hand, he did need the help, she was qualified, and much easier to look at than Jim. She was almost 20 years younger than Roy, but that didn't matter since he didn't plan to get romantically involved. Roy asked her "I know you lived around here, but can you handle life in a small cabin?"

Anne scowled for a second, then remembered that Roy had no idea of her background, so she cooled off, and told Roy about her childhood growing up in the wilds of Alaska, how she learned how to shoot, fish and trap as a young child, spent her teenage years hunting with her older brother, then moving to the city to pursue her Nursing career. Then she ran into Dave, her no-account ex-boyfriend when he came into the hospital after having been stomped by a bull in

a rodeo accident, finally moving back here when Ron turned up missing and she found her boyfriend in bed with his best friend's fiancé. By then, Steve had graduated Med School, did his residency at the Emergency Room in a big Dallas hospital, and needing to pay off his huge Student loan debt, took a 4-year assignment to work in Alaska, and wound up back in his home town with his big sister as his nurse. Roy was amazed at the coincidences in Anne's life, then he realized they weren't coincidences, that there was a reason she was here now, and he was in the hospital and needed a nurse to care for him. Roy's first thought was it would be an excellent chance to witness to her, then thought that the companionship could be nice too. Roy finished his dinner, and Anne gave him another Darvocet, and Roy was soon fast asleep.

The next morning, Roy woke up and his headache was gone, he could focus his eyes, and when Anne greeted him, she looked even cuter than before. She had his breakfast ready, cut it up for him, and cranked up the head of the bed so he could eat, and slid the table in front of him. Roy was really hungry, and cleaned his plate full of scrambled eggs, sausages, hash browns, and English muffins with jam. Anne took his plate away, and asked Roy if he needed anything. Roy said no, but he could use some company.

Anne replied, "Since I don't have any other patients - I can stay a while." and started laughing. Roy asked her if she could put his arm in a sling and help him get dressed so he could get out of bed. He told her the headache was gone, and he could focus clearly, so the symptoms of the concussion were gone, and his equilibrium should be back. She got on the phone, called Steve, who said that if he was feeling up to it, it was OK with him, but to restrict him to the hotel for a day to see how well he navigated and balanced. Anne set down the phone, gave Roy the good news, helped him get dressed in a pair of coveralls with snaps on the left sleeve to make getting dressed easier, slid socks and booties on his feet to keep his feet warm, then picked up his sling, and carefully put his cast into the sling, then the strap around his neck. When he was ready, she helped him up, and he stood without too much difficulty, he was weak, but his balance was working OK. Since he only had one working arm, he couldn't use a walker, so they gave him a crook-top cane to help him balance. Roy took a few minutes to get used to walking with the cane, then walked over to the hotel's library, picked out a good book, and sat in an easy chair near the fire to read.

Anne went back into the room to straighten up and grab her book. She joined Roy in the library, and asked him what he was reading. He was reading a book by Louis L'Amour called "Last of the Breed" about a Native American US pilot that was shot down in Siberia, escaped a POW camp with the clothes on his back, and survived several years. Roy said it was one of the best survival books he had ever read. He asked Anne what she was reading, and she told him she was reading the Special Forces Medic Handbook. Steve said it was one of the best field medical manuals ever written. Anne figured Steve should know since he had applied for the Air Force Para-rescue Jumpers, and was accepted into the Delayed Entry program because he needed to finish his contract to get his Guaranteed Student Loan forgiven. Roy asked her why Steve wanted to do that, it was probably the most grueling and dangerous training program in the US Military. They had more people die in training than in operations. Anne said she knew,

but suspected Steve was an Adrenalin Junkie, since as long as she could remember, he always wanted to do the riskiest thing he could think of - matter of fact, he was the guy who tried to run the rapids a couple of years ago and almost drowned. When Anne asked him why he did it - he said he was bored and wanted to see if he could do it. Roy shook his head, he knew a couple of guys like that in Vietnam. They were with MAC-SOG, since that was the most dangerous assignment they could get, and they were always going out headhunting. Roy sadly remembered neither of them lived through the war.

They went back to reading their novels, and a couple of hours later, Anne got up, and came back with a grilled ham and cheese sandwich for both of them. Roy set the plate on the end table next to him, and ate one handed. Anne was amazed at his manual dexterity, and asked him about it. Roy explained he was a retired Master Machinist, and he had to get his hands into all kinds of tight spots to fix broken machines. Anne nodded with understanding. She asked him if he ever did any gunsmithing, and Roy said no, but he could turn out a match accurate barrel for any rifle in existence given the specs and the right tools and materials. Anne told Roy her favorite gun was a Browning A-Bolt with a BOSS unit in .308. She claimed to be able to hit the right eye of a gnat at 300 yards with one shooting match ammo. Roy almost fell out of his chair, then told Anne about his custom Browning A-bolt he had ordered from his gunsmith. She said she'd love to shoot it, with that big scope, she should be able to tell which way the gnat was facing when she shot it. Roy shook her hand and said "Deal."

Roy went back to his book, and Anne started reading hers again. When the dinner bell rang later that afternoon, Roy decided to eat at the table. To accommodate him, they set his place at the end of the table, with Anne next to him. Roy bowed his head before he started and said grace silently, since he wasn't sure about the rest of the guests. When he looked up, several heads were bowed, including Anne's. Roy thought that was an interesting development, but decided against commenting about it for now. Anne served Roy's plate for him, and sliced his food, then put the plate in front of him. Roy noticed that everyone at the table obviously had a healthy appetite. At your average Los Angeles French Bistro, the quantity of food on the table would have fed the entire clientele for a day. When dinner was finished, Roy was stuffed and exhausted, and after saying goodnight, headed back to his room. Anne helped him use the bathroom, then helped him into bed. She gave him another Darvocet to make it easy for him to sleep, said goodnight, turned off the light, and retired to her room.

The next morning Steve checked in on Roy, and said that he was recovered enough to go back home, as long as he took Anne with him. Roy asked if Steve knew when Jim was going to be flying up his way again, and Steve said he'd check, and tell him or Anne, whoever he saw first. As he was finished, Anne walked in, and Steve told her the good news. Anne said, "I know, I just talked to the mayor, and Jim is flying out tomorrow, so I guess I need to pack my stuff since Roy obviously wants to get home real bad." Anne left to pack, and Roy walked over to the front desk to settle his bill. Roy asked if Steve had left his bill, and the front desk clerk said she didn't have one for him. Roy walked over to the Clinic to speak to Steve. Steve told Roy he wouldn't be getting a bill, since the state already paid for his services, and the only supplies

he used was a couple of rolls of bandage and some casting material he had in stock. Roy felt badly, and said he really wanted to pay Steve. Steve said instead of paying him, he'd appreciate if he would take care of his sister, since he was leaving next month to join the Air Force since his contract with the State was just about up, and he had been accepted for the Pararescue Jumper school. Roy congratulated Steve, and said he would keep an eye out for her. Steve kind of grinned at that, but said nothing. Steve asked Roy to sit down and talk to him for a while. He asked Roy about his adventures after the crash, and how he managed to survive what had to be a wild ride down the river. Since Steve didn't have any patients, and the State required him to keep the clinic open during the day, they retired to Steve's office, sat in some comfortable chairs around a wood stove, and drank coffee as Roy related his story to Steve. He kept Roy talking almost until supper time, then Roy remembered he needed to meet Anne for dinner at the lodge. He asked Steve to join them, and he accepted in a heartbeat. He told Roy that he ate dinner at the lodge several times a week, since the food was so good. They got up and walked over to the Lodge.

Anne seemed amused to see Steve and Roy acting like long-lost friends, and figured they had more in common than either of them realized. They sat down for dinner, and amazingly, the owner asked Roy if he wanted to say Grace. Roy was first floored, then honored, and then they bowed their heads, and Roy said a simple grace out loud, all the people at the table responded "Amen" when he finished. Then the table got noisy as the conversations resumed and the food was passed. Roy ate heartily, and noticed Steve and Anne's plates were full as well. Roy thought that they skipped lunch around here, and ate a big breakfast and dinner so they could get stuff done during the short summer. After dinner, they retired to the sitting room, where Steve and Roy continued their conversation.

After a few minutes, Steve interrupted Roy, walked over to Anne, and told her she should bring her tape recorder and her laptop with her, because he felt Roy's story was so fascinating, and Roy such a good storyteller, that his life story, from the plane crash to the present, was worth telling and possibly publishing. Anne smiled at that, and told Steve that would give her an excuse to stay a while. Steve smiled, and nodded without saying anything. Anne thought that Steve was fixing her up with Roy since he was leaving, possibly for good. She looked over at Roy, and realized while he was 20 years older than her, she could do worse. He was a good Christian man, didn't drink, smoke or swear, and as long as he stayed out from under trees, would probably live a long time. Steve walked back over to Roy, and asked him if he minded Anne writing down his story while they were staying together. Roy thought about it for a moment, realized that telling Anne his story would pass the time while his arm healed, and might help in other ways. Roy was starting to notice Anne was a very attractive lady, and she had a bubbly personality. Roy felt guilty for feeling that way, then remembered what Susan said, and said a silent prayer of thanks. Still, Roy wanted to take things slow and easy, and wanted to avoid falling into any sexual temptation. It would be tough, but he made up his mind that they would remain chaste until they were married, God willing. The three of them talked for hours until Roy started falling asleep in his chair. Roy looked at his watch, and it was almost 10 o'clock. Roy hadn't stayed up that late for years. Roy said he needed to go to bed,

so he could get up early to catch the flight back home. Anne said she had everything packed, and she would meet Roy at his room at 7:00 before breakfast. Jim would be ready to go right around 9:00, which would give them plenty of time for breakfast, since Roy had already paid for his room. Roy said goodnight, and headed off to his room, took a Darvocet, and was soon fast asleep.

Chapter 20 - Long flight home

Anne met Roy at 7:00 sharp, with a couple of duffle bags full of clothes, her laptop, and her microcassette recorder. Roy looked at the pile and quipped, "I'm glad I have a busted wing, because if I carried all that stuff, I'd break my back." Anne just smiled, and said he didn't have to worry, the Mayor was going to give them a lift to the airport, and would help with the bags. With that, they walked into the dining room to eat breakfast. As usual, the spread of food was enough to feed an army, but by now he was used to it, sat down and started eating. An hour later, Roy was stuffed, and pushed carefully away from the table. He didn't have any baggage to pack, since he came down here without anything besides the clothes on his back. Steve had given him a couple of green surgical scrubs with the left sleeve cut open, and fastened with snaps. Anne picked up her duffles, and dragged them to the door of the lodge. The Mayor met them at the door with a Jeep Cherokee, put Anne's bags in back, opened the back door for Anne, then the passenger door for Roy. By the time Roy navigated himself into the jeep, they had 15 minutes to make the plane.

When they got to the runway, there was a big pile of stuff, and two guys standing there, obviously hired by the mayor to load the plane. Jim landed right at 9:00, taxied around to face into the wind for take-off, waited while they loaded the plane, then helped Anne and Roy into the plane. Jim promised Roy that he'd fly a little more smoothly than last time. He explained to Anne and Roy that the last time they flew together, Roy was going into deep shock, and Jim didn't have time to finesse the landing, he needed to get down FAST. Jim made sure the cabin doors were secure, and the load was secured in back, then told them to fasten their seatbelts, then revved the motor, and took off. After a slight bump as they transited from the land to the water, Jim pulled up at the last minute, then flew at treetop level until he built up his airspeed, then slowly climbed to cruising altitude. The ride smoothed out at 2,000 ft, and Roy was able to look around and enjoy the scenery. A little over an hour later, they circled Roy's lake to land, and Jim set the plane down with barely a bump, taxied to the edge of the water, then taxied up to the cabin. Jim stopped the plane, opened the doors, then Anne and Roy got out to inspect the cabin. Everything seemed OK, the garden looked like it could use some water, but other than that, things were normal. Jim opened the back of the plane, grabbed Anne's duffle bags, set them on the ground, then proceeded to unload almost half the plane. Roy saw all the food and stuff they were unloading, then realized they needed enough food to last 2 or more months without Roy hunting or fishing. Roy hoped it wouldn't take that long, but it never hurt. The strangest thing was a large solar panel. Anne explained that she needed to recharge the battery in her laptop if she were to write his story. This was a solar recharger that Steve had built for her, and it worked great. Jim helped them bring all the boxes of food and stuff into the cabin, helped Anne set up her cot in the spare room, then asked if they needed anything else. Anne said she could handle it, and thanked him for the help. Roy offered Jim some coffee, but Jim had to pass since he was on a tight schedule today. He took a rain check for later, got into the plane, fired up the motor, turned the plane around, and taxied off to the lake, turned into the wind, and took off.

When they got inside, Roy asked Anne to sit down, he needed to talk to her. Anne was unsure of herself, but sat down at the table.

“Anne, I’ve been living by myself since my wife died, I haven’t had a woman around, and this cabin definitely looks like a bachelor pad. I appreciate your help, and I don’t want to make you a maid or anything, so I’ll help clean up as much as possible.”

Anne laughed, “Roy this place is way cleaner and more organized than any cabin I’ve seen. Did you build those shelves yourself?”

“Yeah, and if it weren’t for the chainsaw and a couple of tools the mayor loaned me, it would have taken forever. I hate to bring this up, but there is another problem, you won’t have much privacy or comfort around here, and I want to preserve your modesty as much as possible.”

“Don’t worry Roy, I brought a big heavy curtain and a curtain rod for the door between our rooms. You stay on your bed and I’ll stay on mine, and we’ll do fine.”

“Ok Anne, just one more thing - I hope I don’t blow it by mentioning this to you, but I find you attractive, and I want to make sure nothing inappropriate occurs between us while you’re here.”

“I like you too Roy. I guess we’ll cross that bridge when we get there. Oh, I remember - you’re afraid I’ll attack you during the night? Don’t worry, despite what I told you, my Daddy raised me to be a good girl, and I’ll keep my hormones in check.”

They both had a good laugh, and Roy broke the ice “Friends?”

“Definitely. We’ll see about the rest later.” With that, Anne started arranging the food on the shelves, while Roy walked outside to check on the smokehouse. Surprisingly, none of the meat had rotted. It must have stayed smoky in there long enough to finish drying the meat. Roy started taking down the dried meat and carrying it into the cabin. Anne met him at the door. “Just what do you think you’re doing?”

“I’m unloading the smokehouse. I’m only using my right hand, and this stuff weighs almost nothing.”

“Ok, just remember you’re taking pain killers for your busted wing, and they will suppress ANY pain, including overdoing it - so take it easy.”

Roy realized Anne had another thing in common with Susan. Her ability to make him say “Yes Dear.”

An hour later, Roy finished unloading the smokehouse, he was tuckered out. Roy guessed Anne might know what she was talking about - this one-handed stuff was for the birds. By the

time Roy had finished, Anne had “her room” all straightened out, and was marveling at the sink. “How did you manage Hot and Cold running water up here?”

“Don’t get too attached to it, during the winter, the pipes would freeze unless I drained them, so it’s just for the warmer months. When it starts snowing, we’re back to melting snow in that big pot on the stove. I had to run water to the garden, so I just ran it a couple hundred feet further to the house. It’s all solar powered. I need to go out and water the garden - would you like to come with me and I’ll show you?”

“I’d love to, where is it?”

“We taxied past it in the plane this morning. If you’re coming, I need you to strap on that fanny pack, and wear my shoulder holster. You never know what you’ll run into out here. By the way, I’ve got a couple of semi-tame wolves with 4 pups living around here - so don’t shoot them.” Roy handed Anne the fanny pack with the knives and the canteen, then helped her into the shoulder holster, and helped her adjust it. Roy’s face got red because he forgot that the straps would ride close to her breasts, and bumped into them a couple of times while adjusting them. “Whoops, sorry about that.”

“OK, I know you weren’t trying to cop a feel, or I’d have to deck you.”

When they got everything situated, Roy opened the door, and started walking toward the lake. When he got to the garden, it really needed water, so he opened the gate valve, and filled the ditches, then blocked the center ones with his board, and filled the outer ditches. Roy gave the garden a very good watering in hopes that the plants recovered. Some of them were starting to wilt. When Roy was finished, he spotted Oliver in the edge of the forest, and whistled. He warned Anne that Oliver was coming over to check them out. Oliver wasn’t too sure about this new person, but Roy’s presence made him feel easier about it.

As Oliver approached, Anne crouched down saying, “Nice doggy” and Oliver, being a terminal suck-up wandered over to Anne, who stuck out her hand for him to sniff. Oliver liked her scent, and licked her hand. Anne kept talking to Oliver, who then sat down next to her, and let her pet him.

Roy’s chin almost hit his chest, and said, “I guess Oliver likes you - must have good taste in women, Just don’t let Francine catch you flirting with her husband.” At that point, Francine made her appearance. She wasn’t too happy, and let Oliver know it. Oliver turned and woofed at Francine, and she walked over to Oliver in a much less dominant pose than she had a minute ago. She sat down next to Oliver, and Roy walked over to pet them both. A couple of minutes later, the pups joined the group, and they all got to know Anne. “I guess you can stay a while, since the wolves like you.” After playing with the pups awhile, Oliver and Francine turned to go home, and walked back into the forest with their pups following along behind in single file. Roy asked Anne if she’d like fresh fish for dinner. When Anne said OK, they walked back to

the cabin to grab Roy's fishing pole. Roy forgot he had a busted wing, and asked Anne if she'd mind retrieving if he cast. She thought that would work fine, and they set off for the lake. When they reached Roy's fishing hole, Anne helped him bait the hook, and release the bail, then stood back and let Roy cast. While it wasn't an Olympic Record, Roy got the line out where he needed it to go, and handed over to Anne.

A couple of minutes later, the rod tip started twitching, and Anne set the hook, then started reeling in the fish. She commented it must be a big fish, and Roy told her it probably was a lake trout, since that is where they like to hang out. 10 minutes later, she landed the fish, and put it on the stringer. Roy decided to let her fish while he took a nap. Anne said that was OK by her, and proceeded to cast out to Roy's spot. Roy sat down, careful not to hit the cast, then laid on his right side, and was watching Anne fish. She seemed like a natural, and then he remembered she grew up here, and probably fished with her brother Ron on a daily basis, whenever they weren't hunting. Roy noticed how pretty Anne was, even from behind. She had long brunette hair that she wore in a ponytail to not get in the way of stuff, and a nice curvaceous build. He figured she was between 5'6" and 5'8" and 120-150lbs. She was really strong, so he figured if she were a little heavy, it was muscle, not fat.

By the time Roy was done admiring her figure, Anne had caught 3 more fish, and the stringer was full. She walked over to Roy to help him up, and she pulled too hard, so that they almost bumped face to face. Impulsively, Anne bent down to kiss Roy on the lips. It wasn't much of a kiss, but Roy felt like he'd just grabbed hold of a live wire. Anne released Roy, bent down to pick up the fish, and wordlessly walked back to the cabin. Roy didn't know what to make of that, but knew better than to talk right now - it would be better for Anne to bring up the subject. Roy DID know one thing - Anne was a good kisser. Roy followed her back to the cabin in a daze. When they got back, it was late afternoon, Anne told Roy she could clean and gut the fish quicker and easier than he could, so he offered to get the fire going in the stove, and get out the pan, the grease, and the flour to bread the fish with. Anne asked him to get down a can of corn too. Roy said OK, and walked into the back of the cabin, and took the cans down from the shelf. When he was finished, he walked back to the table, and Anne had the fish cleaned, gutted, and filleted. She was in the process of scoring the fish they were going to smoke when he walked in. Roy commented that she was fast at cleaning and filleting fish, and she told him that she had probably done thousands in her life and working fast made it less smelly. Anne handed Roy the fish that they were to smoke, and he took them out to the smokehouse, hung them over the rafters, and built a small fire inside, then quickly closed the door. When he got back inside, Anne had the grease warming on the stove, the fish all ready to bread, and another pot on the stove heating the canned corn.

Roy thought to himself, "OK, she hunts, fishes, cooks, cleans, likes wolves - AND she's a good kisser. Man, I better not blow this one." Roy asked Anne if she needed anything, but she said she was almost finished. Roy told her he had some primitive plates and cups, as well as some silverware. Anne told him to go ahead and set the table. By the time Roy was finished, Dinner was ready. Anne went to the table, picked up the plates, deposited several large pieces of fried

fish on each, as well as half the canned corn, then carried them to the table. They sat down, and Roy bowed his head to say grace. Anne joined him, and Roy thanked God for the good food, for saving his life, and for his new friend. Anne smiled at that one. When he finished, they both said Amen. Anne smiled at Roy, then started eating. Roy was impressed that a small lady could eat so much food, then he remembered he was hungry too, and started into his food. When dinner was finished, Anne cleared the table, and washed the dishes. When she was finished, Roy asked her if she minded him reading the Bible to her. He normally read each night, but since he now had company, he wanted to read it to her. Anne said OK, but told Roy she wasn't that familiar with the Bible, and only remembered some Old Testament Bible Stories from the few times they went to church when she was growing up. Roy said "No Problem, I didn't read the bible either for years until I came up here. Then I had some really neat dreams, and felt Susan telling me I had to get my spiritual act together, and ever since then, I've tried to read the Bible every day. Anne said "Wow. That's never happened to me, then again - the only dead person I know is Ron." Roy explained that it didn't take a message from the dead to believe the Bible, the reason for believing the Bible was written all over the place in it. Jesus died for Us. Everyone on the Earth. All we had to do was accept that gift, and we could be with him in Heaven for Eternity. Anne's eyes were as big as saucers - she'd never heard that before. Roy decided to start with the basics. "Anne, I'm going to read some stuff to you, but it's going to be out of order. I'm going to start in the 3rd chapter of John, if you want, you can sit next to me and read it with me. Anne moved over next to Roy, and Roy showed her where John 3 started:

"1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

3 Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

4 Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

5 Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.

6 "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

7 "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'

8 "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."

9 Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"

10 Jesus answered and said to him, "Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?

11 "Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness.

12 "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?

13 "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.

14 "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

15 "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

16 "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

18 "He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

20 "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.

21 "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

22 After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized.

23 Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized.

24 For John had not yet been thrown into prison.

25 Then there arose a dispute between some of John's disciples and the Jews about purification.

26 And they came to John and said to him, "Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified--behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him."

27 John answered and said, "A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven.

28 "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.'

29 "He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.

30 "He must increase, but I must decrease.

31 "He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.

32 "And what He has seen and heard, that He testifies; and no one receives His testimony.

33 "He who has received His testimony has certified that God is true.

34 "For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God does not give the Spirit by measure.

35 "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.

36 "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son

shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

When he finished reading, Roy asked Anne if she understood. She couldn't speak, but shook her head No. Roy asked her if she wanted him to explain it. She finally said OK.

"Anne, the first 2 verses in Chapter 3 are setting up the conversation that Jesus is having with Nicodemus - a Pharisee - He was an important spiritual and civil leader for the Jews in Jerusalem. He came to Jesus at night because he didn't want the rest of the Pharisees to know he was meeting with Jesus, since they all hated him and wanted him dead. Nicodemus was asking Jesus several questions, because he had rightly guessed that Jesus was the Messiah, God's Chosen One. Jesus answers Nicodemus' unasked question, "How do I get to Heaven?" Jesus told him he had to be born again. I'm sure you've heard the phrase "Born Again Christian" - usually used disparagingly by the Liberal Media. Actually, Jesus is talking here about a Spiritual Rebirth, like he says in the next verses. Jesus addresses Nicodemus' lack of faith - "How can I explain heavenly things when you won't believe earthly things?" Jesus tells Nicodemus he is the Son of God, and that he must die for Everyone's sins. I'm sure you've heard John 3:16, or at least seen a banner at a football game with the number on it. It's one of the most famous passages of the bible. It basically says that God loved the world so much that he sent his Only Son to die in our place. Imagine, God's Son coming down from heaven, taking on a human body, and dying on a cross so that we might be with him for eternity if we only believe and accept his gift."

Anne started crying at this time, and Roy set down the Bible to hold her. "I didn't know - all these years... All these wasted years." Anne continued to sob, and finally came up for air.

"Anne, the Good News is God Loves You, and wants you with him forever. No matter what you have done, he will forgive everything you've ever done, give you a full pardon. You've heard about a Presidential Pardon, or a Governor's Pardon - well the Creator of the Universe wants to give you a Full Pardon, and all you have to do is accept." It says so right here in verses 17 and 18. All you have to do is ask for God's forgiveness and Believe that his Son died for your sins."

Anne had stopped crying by now, and asked Roy, "Is it really that easy?"

Roy thought about his answer for a minute, and said, "That's what the Bible says. I believe it, and I know Susan believed it - and I'm sure she's in heaven, because I've seen her."

At this point Anne broke down and fell onto her knees crying. Then she asked God's forgiveness, and it was like a light went on in her face. She remained on her knees, but was no longer crying. It was almost like a miracle had happened, and that's what was happening. Roy slid off his chair, knelt down next to her, and prayed with her. He was praying for Jesus to open her eyes to the truth, and to set her free from all the guilt and hurt in her life. Finally, Roy was too tired to keep praying. Just then, Anne turned to him and gave him a Big Hug.

“Roy, you were right. I don’t know how to describe it, but you were right. I was kneeling there praying, and all of a sudden, a huge weight was lifted off my shoulders, and I knew that God loved me. I know it isn’t going to be easy from here on out, but I’m sure that I’m going to heaven. I’m so glad you did this. I’m free of all my guilt and fears. What’s really weird is I REALLY LOVE YOU but I don’t want to jump in bed with you right now, like I would of in the past. Later, maybe, but not right now.”

“Anne, this is going to take some getting used to - until I met you, I was still in mourning over Susan. Now I understand she was right, and I can love again. I want to really get to know you, and if my first impressions turn out right, I think I’d like to marry you. We’re going to have to be careful, and not give in to carnal temptations. How about we limit contact to kissing, holding hands, and an occasional back rub?”

“Oh Roy, you’re such a romantic. I haven’t known a man like you since I was a kid. Every one of them always wanted to jump right into bed, then I never saw them again. This sounds like fun.”

“Anne, I don’t know how to tell you this, but I need to get to bed. I’m worn out.” Anne leaned over, and gave Roy a goodnight kiss, then got up, pulled the curtain, and said goodnight. Roy blew out the lantern, stripped down to his longjohns, and got into bed.

Chapter 21 - We've Only Just Begun

Roy woke up the next morning to the smell of Breakfast cooking. It had been years since he woke up to the smells of someone cooking breakfast for him. Maybe this wasn't such a bad idea after all.

Roy got up, got dressed, then tapped on the curtain like a door, "You decent yet?"

Anne giggled and said, "Right silly, I always fry bacon in the buff. Come on in."

Roy pulled the curtain aside, Anne was wearing a long robe with a bathrobe over it, and Alaskan mukluks on her feet. Roy wished he had his cast off so he could wear his caribou buckskins and his fur lined boots - they were much warmer than the Levis and flannel shirt he was wearing. Roy looked at the stove and commented, "Is all that for us?"

"Unless Oliver and Francine are hungry. I hope I didn't make too much, I'm used to eating a big breakfast, skipping lunch and eating a nice dinner. You get used to eating more food living up here, especially in the winter, or when you're doing heavy work like logging and all the other stuff you need to do for yourself around here."

"I wouldn't know, Oliver and I basically lived on Jerky and pemmican all winter."

"Well, Roy, that's what the Indians lived on as well - it seems the fat in the pemmican has tons of calories, and the jerky is a lot more concentrated than eating a steak full of water. 6 oz of Jerky just about equals 1 pound of steak."

"Wow, I didn't realize that, I guess I was eating more calories than I realized."

"Regular food isn't as calorie dense as the stuff you've been eating, so you need to eat more of it. I'll work your jerky into my cooking plans, and if it's OK with you, I thought of some stuff we'll need, like canning supplies for that garden, and the meat you'll catch when you hunt. I have a sneaky suspicion we'll be spending the winter together, so we need to plan accordingly."

"Whoa, jumping the gun just a bit aren't you?"

"Maybe, but it's better to be prepared for both of us staying comfortably instead of surviving on short rations all winter."

"You're right Anne, sorry about that, I was just kidding."

"No you weren't. You were being a typical gun-shy middle-aged male. You've been living on your own for a while, and having a woman around the house will take some getting used to."

Combine that with your recent loss of Susan, and this will take a LOT of getting used to - but I promise not to bite...Much."

"Anne, you are positively a Riot. Where did you get your sense of humor?"

"Probably from my Dad's side, Ron got it too. You'd have liked him if you got a chance to know him."

"Well, if he was anything like you, we'd have gotten along great."

"Breakfast is ready, you want to get the plates out?"

Roy got the table set quickly, set a lantern in the middle of the table, and lit it - it wasn't easy one-handed but he managed. Anne brought the plates of food to the table, and she sat down. Roy bowed his head to say grace, and Anne joined him, then they ate together. After breakfast, they cleared the table, then Roy said he needed to call the Mayor, and asked Anne to help him with the radio. Roy set the radio to the mayor's frequency, checked all the other dials and switches were right, and then keyed the mike. "Roy calling the Mayor, how do you read?"

"I read you loud and clear, how are you doing Roy? Over"

"We're doing fine - I need you to make a shopping list for me, we're going to need some stuff."

"I kind of figured that, OK ready to copy."

Roy transmitted a long list of stuff they needed, including a second shoulder holster and Colt Anaconda for Anne and a couple of boxes of ammo, another Browning A-bolt since Anne had to sell hers, all the canning equipment Anne said they were going to need, some more food stuffs and supplies, and a New King James Bible for Anne just like Roy's. The Mayor told Roy he had everything in stock except for the guns, which he would order through Roy's gunsmith. The Mayor talked to Roy's gunsmith last week, and placed an order for a new Remington 700 in 7mm Magnum. The mayor was really impressed by the knowledge and pricing of Roy's gunsmith, and told Roy that he'd probably get a bunch of work from the people around Allakaket. Roy was glad to hear that, since he knew that his gunsmith could use the business. He was a friend of Roy's that worked for an Airplane manufacturer as a Master Machinist like Roy, but lost his job when the company lost a contract for a new jet fighter. He went to work for Roy for a couple of years to pay the bills, then opened up his own gunsmithing business. He did mostly custom work, and some custom reloading for customers that he had made guns for. His hand loaded .308 ammo was so accurate that they really didn't need the BOSS unit, but it was nice to have just in case Roy couldn't get any more of his hand loads. Another thing he did was build custom scope mounting rings. He told Roy that he was amazed that people would spend several hundred dollars on a Leupold scope, and then skimp on the mount. He machined mounts out of billet steel that were guaranteed never to lose their zero. He even made a set of

QD mounts for people who wanted to switch between daylight and NV scopes without losing their zero. His mounts were so well engineered and heavy duty that he was getting orders from people with BMG-50 rifles to make rings for them.

Roy came back to reality when the Mayor asked him if there was anything else he could get. Roy put Anne on the radio, who added a couple of items, then signed off. She put the microphone down, walked over to Roy and gave him a Big Hug. Roy asked, "What was that for?"

"That was so sweet, ordering me a new Browning A-Bolt and a .44 Magnum setup like yours."

"I figured if you were going to stay up here a while, it would be an idea so I could get my shoulder holster back, and you could help hunting."

"You mean no "Me Tarzan, You Jane" stuff - You want me to go hunting with you?"

"Sure, I needed someone to skin and gut the stuff I shot."

Anne grinned and replied, "More like YOU will clean and skin what I shoot."

"Actually, Anne, I just wanted you to be with me, and if you like hunting and want to come with me, I'd love to have you. I've got a girlfriend most men dream about. You like to hunt, fish, you're drop-dead gorgeous, you're a trained nurse, and you think I'm funny."

Anne gave Roy another hug and said, "Flatterer. You probably say that to all the girls."

"No, the last girl I said that to, I married." Anne put her head on Roy's shoulder and started crying. Roy realized he still didn't understand women, and the best thing to do was to keep holding Anne while she cried. Soon enough, she came up for air, wiped away her tears, and said, "You really loved her, didn't you."

"I still do, but that doesn't mean I can't love you too. Susan told me in a dream when I was pinned under the tree that I might meet someone, and to go ahead and love them, since she wanted me to be happy."

"Roy, that is the most romantic thing I've ever heard. I hope I get to meet her."

"Anne, we both will someday when we're reunited in Heaven."

"Roy, can we go see Ron's grave site? I'd like to say goodbye"

"OK, Anne. Let's go water the garden, and I'll bring the fishing gear, since it's on the way."

"I think I need to come up with some recipes for serving fish."

“Anne, I practically lived on the stuff all summer, but I didn’t have access to the town for supplies, so my diet was pretty boring. Luckily Oliver loved fish, so he ate the dried fish all winter, and I got to eat the moose and caribou jerky, which tasted a lot better. With that, Roy helped Anne into the shoulder holster and fanny pack, then picked up the tackle box.

“Anne, remind me when we get back to order you a fanny pack of your own. What kinds of knives do you like carrying?”

“I like your Bowie, but I prefer a skinner to this <skip> thing you’ve got next to it.”

“I know, I prefer a skinner too, but when I bought it, I was also thinking survival, and I used it as a hatchet enough times to make it worth it. Since we’re together, I think I could let you skip the <skip> and just get a straight skinner. I’ll call the Mayor when we get back, and order another set of knives and a fanny pack when we get back. It will take my knife maker a couple of months to make them, but it will be worth it. I’ve only had to sharpen the Bowie once or twice since I’ve been here, and the Ulu got a little more use, so I’ve sharpened it about 4 or 5 times, but I was basically just touching up the edge since that Titanium Nitride coating is so tough.” Roy opened the cabin door, and Anne walked with him to the garden. They stopped briefly to water the garden, and refill the canteens, then walked to the lake. When they got to the lake, Anne marveled at the beauty around her. “I understand why you wouldn’t want to leave here, It’s so beautiful.”

Roy gave Anne a gentle hug around the waist - “Now that you’re here with me, I’ve got no reason to leave.” Anne leaned her head onto Roy’s shoulder, then they headed North to visit Ron’s grave. When they got there, Roy stopped and knelt. Anne walked closer to the grave, and knelt next to her brother’s grave, and started crying. Roy thought Anne would like to be alone with her brother, and stayed where he was. After a while, Anne called Roy over, and he knelt next to her. Anne was talking to her brother, then she said, “Ron, this is Roy - he’s the guy who pulled you out of the lake and buried you so you could rest in peace. Anyway, I just wanted to tell you we’re in love, and I’m sure he’s “Mr. Right” - not like that idiot rodeo clown in Texas. Roy’s special, and I’m sure you two would have liked each other. I hope you’re OK where you are, and I just wanted you to know I’m here, and I’m finally happy. Talk to ya later Bro.” Anne bent over to kiss Ron’s dogtag that Roy had left on the grave marker, got up, and helped Roy to his feet. When they were both standing, Anne buried herself in Roy’s arms, sobbing uncontrollably. When she regained her composure, she told Roy that after her parents had died when she was young, Ron basically raised Anne and Steve. He was the only Daddy she remembered. She thanked Roy for taking care of him, then they picked up the fishing gear and went fishing. They caught about 6 large lake trout, so Anne called it a day, and they walked back to the cabin. Anne set the fish down, Roy turned on the radio and called the Mayor, to ask him to order the knives and a fanny pack for Anne. She started cleaning the fish, and before he signed off, Anne had the fish gutted, skinned, and filleted. Roy took most of it out to the smokehouse to smoke, and Anne grabbed the two bigger fillets for dinner. While Roy was setting up the smokehouse, Anne started a fire in the woodstove, got out the cast iron skillet,

and when it was hot, added the grease from last night to the pan. While the grease got hot, Anne breaded the fish, and got it ready, then slid the fillets into the hot grease, then turned around to check the pantry. She spotted a can of mixed vegetables, got out a small saucepan, opened the can, and heated it on the stove while the fish cooked. Roy walked back into the cabin right as Anne finished cooking, so Roy set the table and lit the lantern as quickly as possible. Anne set the plates on the table, then sat down. Roy bowed his head to say grace, and he realized he had a lot to be thankful for, and spent a few minutes thanking God for everything. Finally, Roy said Amen, and they started eating before their food got cold. Between bites, Roy told Anne that his Summer routine used to be to chop wood in the morning, then fish in the afternoon. Now with a busted wing, he couldn't chop wood for a while. Anne commented that she thought they had more than enough wood, and when his arm healed, she'd help him cut some more just to be on the safe side. She told Roy to do whatever he felt he could, since exercise was the best form of therapy for a broken arm. Anne thought they could remove the cast in another 4-6 weeks, and she asked Roy how the arm felt, and to wiggle his fingers. Anne told Roy they'd have to do this daily to make sure his arm was healing properly, and that she needed to know ASAP about any pain or lack of feeling in the fingers. When they were finished, Anne asked Roy to read some more of the Bible to her. Roy said "OK, I think we should start at the beginning" and opened his Bible to Genesis. He explained to Anne that some people thought Genesis was just a story, but Roy felt it was an accurate description of the creation of the world, and God's creation of Man. With that, Roy started reading. Anne interrupted occasionally, and Roy explained things as well as he knew. He could see Anne was intelligent as well, and that he should add a Concordance and a Strong's Dictionary to the shopping list, because soon she will be asking questions he didn't know the answers to.

When he finished reading, they both got tired. Anne stood up, said goodnight, and gave Roy a fairly passionate goodnight kiss on the lips. Roy sat there stunned as Anne walked into her bedroom and closed the curtain. Roy thought "Man this sure beats living with a Wolf." and got undressed to go to bed.

Chapter 22 - And the Beat Goes On

When Roy awoke the next morning, Anne was already up and about. Roy got the lower half dressed without help, then Anne showed up to help him with his shirt. As she helped him get dressed, Roy noticed that Anne had a few crinkles around her eyes, and that they got bigger when she smiled. He also noticed she had the prettiest green eyes he'd ever seen. Anne had real gentle hands, and Roy didn't experience any pain as she helped him get dressed. When they finished, she told him that she had a pot of coffee and some oatmeal with raisins and cinnamon all ready for breakfast. Roy handed her a couple of bowls, and after she filled them, and a mug of coffee for each, they sat down to breakfast. As they ate, they started talking about Roy's adventure, and Anne quickly got up to get her tape recorder. She set it on the table, and asked Roy some questions.

He started at the beginning of the story, with him and Susan selling their house and traveling. When he got to the point of Susan's death, Anne was crying. She stopped the tape, and asked Roy a couple of questions. Anne told Roy she suspected the physician may have given Anne a deliberately fatal dose of sedative to take when the pain got too bad. She said it happens all the time, since Cancer is not a pleasant way to die, and many compassionate physicians give their end-stage cancer patients what they call a "black pill" to take, and never wake up when the pain gets too bad. Roy looked like he was going to cry, then Anne leaned over and gave him a hug, and asked him if he felt better knowing that Susan died peacefully in her sleep, rather than in a hospital stuck full of tubes and in pain. Roy thought that Anne was especially sensitive, and felt she had been through this before with other patients and families. Finally she came out and said, "Roy - sometimes the best we can do for a patient is to make them comfortable, and give them a relatively painless way to die in peace. I'm sure you would have wanted it to happen this way."

"Anne, I know you're right, but I still miss her, and sometimes I'm mad at her for leaving me."

"Roy, she didn't have any choice in the matter. If what you said was true, she was already end-stage and in increasing pain. Even putting her in ICU would have only delayed the inevitable by a week or two, at the cost of her going through a lot of unnecessary pain. This way, you got to spend as much quality time with her as you could, and when she realized the pain was becoming unbearable, she took the pill the doctor gave her. The other way, she'd have been stuck full of tubes, wasting away, unable to talk, and in a lot of pain, even with painkillers. There's nothing to be mad at her about."

"I know, but sometimes..I don't know."

Anne moved closer to Roy, and held him almost like a little boy "It's OK Roy, I know almost how you felt, until yesterday, I never had any closure with Ron, and hoped somewhere in the back of my mind he might still be alive until I saw his dog tag hanging from that cross. We'll

get through this together.”

“Anne, I don’t know what to think, except Susan must have sent an Angel to look after me.”

Then they both started crying again. When they had regained their composure and disentangled themselves, Anne turned the tape recorder back on, and Roy resumed the story. He talked about traveling for a while, running out of things to do, then reading an ad in a magazine about Caribou hunting in Alaska, and calling Ron and talking to him. Anne hung on his every word, while the tape recorder got everything. Roy went into his preparations, including Ron’s advice about packing everything in waterproof “river runner” bags, and carrying a fanny pack, and even what kind of knives to bring. Roy told her of his getting in shape, kicking a long-term smoking habit, and cutting back on his drinking. Anne was impressed, but didn’t want to disturb his narrative. Roy continued describing packing, and boarding the airliner to fly to Alaska, and all the hassles he had with getting his guns and knives onto the plane. If he didn’t have all his ducks in a row, including showing the airline his application for an Alaskan Non-resident Hunting permit, he was sure that they wouldn’t have let him board.

Then he described meeting Ron, and how he was in a hurry to get airborne. Roy reached over to stop the tape, and reached for Anne’s hands. “I don’t know how to tell you this, but during the flight, I got the feeling Ron was showing off and not being too careful. Then he banked hard away from Mt. McKinley right through a cloud bank, and flew in the clouds for several miles. I’m sure he got lost in the clouds. I think what killed him was a downdraft that dropped the plane into the lake before he could recover from it. I’m sure he was killed on impact, since when I looked over, his neck was severely broken.” Anne reached over and turned the tape recorder back on.

Roy continued to tell his story, including details of the plane crash, his miraculous escape from the plane without major injuries, and his almost drowning, then succumbing to hypothermia before he got out of the water and made a fire. Roy told her of the week spent by the lake with the fading hope of rescue, then the realization that he was truly stranded, and that no one knew where he was, and that he was on his own. He told her about finding and restoring the cabin, finding the flintlock rifle and the gear, making lead balls, snaring and fishing for food, then deciding he needed to shoot some big game, and the preparations that went into that. Finally he got to his Alaskan Hunting Adventure, where he shot his first moose, and his first big game animal with a smokepole.

Anne stopped him at this point, and asked, “You shot a 1000 lb plus bull moose with an unfamiliar flintlock rifle? Wow. I’ve shot flintlock before, but never hunted with them. I felt they were too unreliable.”

“Me too, but beggars can’t be choosers. I had to kill some large animals if I were to survive the winter. I didn’t think I could do it on fish, rabbits, and squirrels. As it turned out, the flintlock was a lifesaver, since it allowed me to have enough meat not only for me, but for Oliver as

well.”

“Roy, I don’t understand, what’s the deal with Oliver? You befriended a Wild Wolf. What were you thinking?”

“At the time I thought it was a good idea, and it turned out Oliver saved my life at least twice, and more than paid for all the food I fed him when he alerted me to a couple of bears that could have been dangerous.”

“OK, but HOW did you do it?”

“I figured Oliver was a Lone Wolf that had been driven out of his Mother’s territory, and had traveled from Denali National Park to this area, since this was the closest habitat that would support a wolf that wasn’t some other pack’s territory. When I first met him, he was starving, and I had some fish guts from a fish I had cleaned, so I piled them up next to me. Anyway, it worked; Oliver walked right next to me, and sat down to eat. When he finished, I stuck my hand out in the classic “sniff my hand and let’s be friends” pose. Oliver sniffed my hand, and smelling the fish guts on it, proceeded to lick my hand clean. When we had finished making friends, I picked up my fanny pack, and headed for the lake to catch some more fish. When I fed Oliver a couple of whole salmon, that sealed it as far as he was concerned. From then on, we were inseparable - at least until Fran showed up.”

“Anyway, I skipped a real hair-raising experience - I need to backtrack in the story to before I met Oliver. I went berry picking down by the lake, and surprised this BIG brown bear bruin while he was eating. When he stood up, he was easily a foot taller than me, and I’m no shrimp. He obviously thought I was encroaching on his private berry patch, and he wasn’t happy. Unfortunately, I looked around, and there wasn’t anything around I could climb. He wasn’t backing down either. I quickly grabbed the rifle, shouldered it, and shot the bear in the chest as he stood about 40 feet away. I knew I wouldn’t have enough time to reload, so I dropped the rifle, picked up my knife and <skip> to defend myself as best as I could. I would have never survived an attack from an uninjured bear, but the bullet in his chest should slow him down, and hopefully he’d bleed out before too long. I fended off his first couple of swipes, then cut him a couple of times. Good thing I had lanyards on both weapons, since the knife got knocked out of my grip a couple of times. As the bear weakened from blood loss, I took advantage of an opening, reversed my grip on the <skip> and smacked him between the eyes with the hammer head, stunning him long enough to take the Bowie and slit his throat. That ended the fight, and after I recovered, I skinned and gutted the bear, then removed the claws to make a necklace.”

“Of all the Foolhardy, Stupid things you could do, WHAT possessed you to take on a Bear with just primitive weapons?”

“Anne, Lighten Up - will you! It’s not like I had any choice. I told you, I surprised a feeding

bear in dense cover. Neither of us saw, heard or smelled each other until the confrontation. Believe me, if I'd had any option, I would have took it. Besides, I DID take the other route a couple of months ago - It was a similar situation, right after I met you the first time. I was out fishing, and this grouchy bear decided I was in his fishing spot. I dropped the rod, and pulled Ron's .44 Magnum, thumbed back the hammer, and stared down the bear with a quote from Dirty Harry - I guess even the bears in Alaska have heard of Dirty Harry, because this bear backed down, so I didn't have to shoot it."

"Roy, I guess I don't understand men too well - I mean you seem Brave and Foolhardy at the same time, yet in another situation, you use your head and bluff your way out of it."

"Anne, there's no disconnect here - I wasn't bluffing, I had the hammer back and my finger was pulling the trigger, I only had about 1 pound of pull left before the trigger let off, it's just for some reason, the Bear decided he didn't want to challenge me that day. By the way, I ended up shooting him a week or two later anyway, when he challenged me again, and wouldn't back down. It's not the first bear I've shot around here either, Oliver spotted several of them while we were out hunting, and they were too close to let go, so I shot 2 of them. Remember, this was Ron's gun, and he told me to bring a revolver just like it - he told me the bears were real thick North of Mount McKinley. He wasn't kidding, I haven't seen this many bears before in my life. I'd highly recommend you keep that gun handy when we're out and about until I get healed up."

"Roy, remember my earlier crack about Tarzan and Jane, well - I had the wrong book, you're more like Jeremiah Johnson."

"Anne, you may have said that in jest, but I DO have a buckskin jacket, pants, and knee-high moccasins I made myself last winter, and I imagine I looked pretty wild and wooly when I came into town the first time."

"I didn't think you looked that wild and wooly, but you'd been in town for a day or two before I met you, and you had a chance to clean up. You MADE that outfit. Wow... I guess this means we are going to need matching sets for this winter. Speaking of which, we're going to have to do some hunting, which means I get to do the shooting for a while."

"Not so fast there little lady. Let's see you shoot first." (Roy went into the other room to get his gun case with the Browning A-bolt and set it down on the table)

Opening the case, Anne practically drooled over the Stainless Browning A-Bolt in .308 with a Fluted Match Barrel, BOSS unit, McMillan Synthetic Stock, 3x12x50 AO Leupold scope and Harris Bipod.

"Roy, this is the most beautiful rifle I've seen."

“I ordered one just like it for you.”

“No Way, Roy, I’m keeping THIS one. You won’t be able to shoot for at least a couple of months, so I’m claiming this one. Can I go ahead and shoot it? I want to get it dialed in.”

“OK, we’ve got a couple of hours of daylight left. Let’s go outside and shoot it. I’ll set up some targets for you - how far do you want to shoot?”

“How about 1 target every 100 yards from 100-400 yards. 400 yards should just be about to the lake.”

“You’re Kidding me, right? 400 yards. I can’t hit anything outside of 300, even with a good scope.”

“I forgot to tell you, Ron was an Army Sniper, and he taught me how to shoot long distance.”

“Wow, when I get better, I want lessons.”

“Deal - now let’s get those targets set up - I’m going to want a 12” target to make it easier to pick up in the scope at 400 yards. How about some of these logs?”

“OK, those will work good - set them on the cart, it will make it much easier.”

An hour later, they were ready to shoot. It turned out the lake was almost exactly 400 yards from the cabin. Anne made a quarter-sized mark on each log to use as a bullseye. She handed a set of earplugs to Roy, then inserted hers. She spread a tarp on the ground, set the case on the right side of it, took out the rifle, loaded the magazine with 5 match rounds, extended the legs on the bipod, got into a good prone position, made a few adjustments to the Browning A-Bolt and her body position until the scope’s crosshairs rested on the center of the bullseye she had made on the 100 yard log. She looked at Roy, who gave her a thumbs up, and Anne cycled the bolt and released the safety. Anne slowed her breathing and even her pulse as she concentrated on the sights and the bullseye, and as the crosshairs steadied on the bullseye, inhaled and blew half of her breath out, held her breath, and squeezed the trigger. The rifle roared, and Anne saw the 100 yard log split with a dead-center shot. She wrote the 100 yard settings as well as the environmental conditions just like Ron had taught her in her logbook then she lined up the crosshairs on the 200 yd target, noted any breezes and their direction, and dialed in her corrections. Satisfied, she resumed her position behind the scope, cycled the action, steadied up, caught the target in the crosshairs, and gently squeezed the trigger. The 200 yard log was hit dead-center, so she wrote the 200 yard settings into her log, then switched to the 300 yard log, dialed in the windage and elevation adjustments, steadied herself behind the rifle, and as the sights settled on the bullseye, squeezed the trigger. This round hit dead center as well, but didn’t destroy the log, so she reloaded, and quickly put 2 more shots into it for a very tiny 3-shot group. Then she moved on to the 400 yard target. Before she got set up, she wrote the

dope for the rifle and scope in her logbook for her 300 yard shot, then reloaded. Anne got back into her prone position, sighted through the scope, doped out the wind, adjusted the scope, then steadied up and concentrated on the sight and the target. When she was in the zone again, she cycled the bolt, cleared the safety, then carefully sighted in on the bullseye. There was a slight wobble in her hold at 400 yards, but that was to be expected, Anne knew to shoot between her pulses, and how to use the adductor muscle of her leg to get a rock solid position. Finally the image stabilized, and she focused on the target and sight to the exclusion of everything else. When the bullseye was in the exact center of the crosshairs, she squeezed the trigger, and was rewarded with another bullseye. Anne put 4 more rounds into the target, then set the rifle aside to cool. She got up, removed her earplugs, and walked over to Roy who was staring openmouthed at her.

“Remind me never to get on your bad side. I’ve seen some serious marksman before, but I’ve never seen a woman shoot like you just did. The only time I’ve seen anything close was a friend of mine who must have been a sniper in Vietnam. You were hitting that 400 yard target like most people shoot at a 100 yard target. I’m dying to check out that 300 yard and 400 yard target. First, let me get at tape measure.”

“Wait a minute Roy, there’s a dial caliper in this kit - obviously your gunsmith knows what he’s doing if he plans to measure his rifle’s groups with a caliper.”

They left the rifle cooling on the porch, and walked hand in hand out to the targets. The first two were destroyed, but Roy could clearly see the bullet impact in the center of the bullseye. When they got to the 300 yard log, Roy was standing there dumbfounded. All 3 bullet holes were touching. Anne measured the outer edge of the group, subtracted the width of the bullet from the group size, and came up with a quarter inch group. When Roy saw the number on the caliper, he almost passed out. Finally they made it to the 400 yard target, while the bullet holes weren’t touching, they were a very tight cloverleaf. The final number Anne came up with was a little over ½ inch. Roy couldn’t believe it. He’d just seen a woman shoot a half-inch 5-shot group at 400 yards.

Roy turned to Anne and said, “OK you can do all the shooting you want when we hunt - just let me take the easy ones.”

“OK, as soon as your arm heals. That Bipod definitely helps, I normally shoot three-quarter inch groups at 400 yards prone. That is a sweet rifle - I think he did some action work, as well as bedding and a few other tricks. That Rifle is a Tack-driver.” Anne threw her arms around Roy and squeezed the stuffing out of him, and then proceeded to give him a deep soul-kiss. Roy recovered from his shock in time to return the favor, and soon they were deeply involved in a very passionate kiss. When they finally came up for air, Roy said, “I think we had better push up that marriage date or we could be in trouble.”

“Roy, are you proposing?”

Roy thought about it for a second, got on one knee with tears in his eyes, and looked into Anne's eyes. "I never thought I'd say this to anyone else, but I love you Anne, and I want to spend the rest of my life with you. Will you marry me?"

Anne helped Roy up, planted another lip lock on him, and when she finally came up for air she said, "Of course I'll marry you, I know I can't replace Susan, but I feel the same way you do. I want to spend the rest of my life with you."

"Anne, you just made me the happiest man ever - let's hurry back to the cabin to see if they have a minister in town."

"Roy, the Mayor is an Ordained Methodist Minister."

"Great, that settles it - next question is when?"

"As soon as we can, it will take the mayor a day to get the license faxed over from Juneau, and I want Steve to be there to give me away, and he leaves next week for the Army."

"Great, that settles it - let's go call the Mayor and give him the good news."

They walked hand in hand back to the cabin.

Chapter 23 - Wedding Bell Blues

When they got back to the cabin, Roy started asking Anne a bunch of questions. “Anne, I know the Bride is supposed to plan the wedding, but I had a couple of questions for you. Is a Religious Ceremony OK? How about Rings? Any idea about readings, etc?”

“One at a time there Roy. First of All, it IS the Bride that is supposed to plan the wedding, but I can understand your questions. Since I’ve never been married before, I don’t know what the traditions, etc. are. Can you help me?”

”Ok, first of All, we need to decide on whether we will have a Civil or Religious ceremony - My preference is for a Religious Ceremony, but it doesn’t have to be a traditional ceremony. I don’t care what we wear, as long as it’s Gender Appropriate - I’m NOT wearing a dress.”

“Roy, you’re such a kidder...Of course I want a Religious Ceremony, otherwise I wouldn’t have mentioned the Mayor was a Methodist Minister. Second of all, I don’t have a dress, and I’d rather see you in pants than a dress - thank you very much.”

OK, Anne - how about Rings - do you want a Diamond, or a pair of gold bands for us?”

“I don’t think I could wear a diamond here, besides you’re the only person besides me that’s going to see it regularly, let’s go with the gold bands. We can wear those around here OK. As far as the readings, you know I don’t know much about the Bible - how about if you show me some relevant passages.”

“I knew you were a bright girl when I met you - speaking of which, I don’t know how old you are, and I don’t want to get accused of robbing the cradle. I promise I’ll never ask again.”

Anne could see Roy’s face was flushed with embarrassment, he realized he had put his foot in his mouth, but she realized she hadn’t told Roy - This could be fun...She thought she’d let him squirm a while longer. “How Old do you think I am?”

Roy almost fainted from the strain, “I Hope you’re over 30. I figured somewhere between 30 and 35.”

Anne decided to let him off the hook “Roy you’re sweet, I’ll be 32 in July. So you’re NOT robbing the cradle unless marrying a spinster is considered cradle robbing.”

“A beautiful woman like you - a Spinster? <serious belly laugh> It’s not like your living with 20 cats in a one-room apartment. I’ll be 56 in December.”

“No kidding - I figured you were a couple of years older - guess I didn’t see you at your best.

Don't take that the way it sounds, it's just people in the hospital look older due to their poor skin color. Not trying to change the subject, but could you please show me those readings?"

"Yes, Dear - I'll be there in a second." Roy got up and picked up his NKJV Bible, opened it to the New Testament. "Let's start in Corinthians. This is a letter written by Paul, to the Church in Corinth, it talks about the nature of love, but is very appropriate for weddings."

Anne read the text, and looked up at Roy when she was finished turned to Roy and told him "That is so perfect, I'd love the Mayor to read that section of the Bible at our Wedding." Roy made a notation that Anne couldn't read, but any Bible student would recognize:

1CO 13:1-13. Anne asked him about it, and Roy told her "that's how Chapters and Verses of the Bible are written. We're reading in the First Book of Corinthians, Chapter 13, and verses 1-13 - so 1CO 13:1-13 means First book of Corinthians (there are 2) Chapter 13, Verses 1-13 - It's a form of shorthand used by Bible Students, instead of writing everything out. I'd like to show you another chapter, but before I do, don't get offended by the passage, some women misinterpret it, and some men abuse their privilege. I'll try to translate for you." Roy opened his Bible up to Ephesians 5:22-33.

Anne started reading "Whoa...What's this SUBMIT BS? No Way Jose."

"Anne, let me explain - if you read the next couple of verses, it makes sense - Husbands aren't supposed to dominate their wives. They are responsible to God for them, and as a result, they need to be responsible for certain decisions involving Spiritual matters. Husbands and wives are supposed to be a team, if you'll read in verses 28-33, you'll see that, as well as modeling the Marriage relationship to the relationship Christ has to his church. Christ offered himself up for death for his church. I'm not saying I have to die for you, but I'd definitely risk or even lose my life to save yours."

"Roy, you're such a romantic" <Kiss>

"OK, I think this about covers it - I think we can definitely leave the "obey" part out of the vows."

"Roy, that was the smartest thing you said all day."

Enveloped in pre-nuptial bliss, the two walk over to the radio to tell the Mayor.

They quickly assembled the radio, giggling like kids, then Roy turned on the power, keyed the mike since the radio was already set on the Mayor's frequency, and said, "Roy calling the Mayor, are you there, over."

A few seconds later, the Mayor replied, "Go ahead Roy, I'm here - Everything OK over there?"

“Everything’s Great - Anne and I have something to tell you, and a favor to ask you.”

“OK, this ought to be interesting.”

Anne took the mike from Roy’s hand, “Bill - we’re getting married, and we want you to do the ceremony.”

“Congratulations you two - when are you going to get married?”

Anne kept talking since Roy was obviously tongue-tied, “As Soon As Possible, Bill.”

“OK, it will take me a couple of days to make the arrangements here in town, and have the license e-mailed to my office. Ordinarily, I’d do marriage counseling, but I think I can skip it with you two. Also, there’s a blood test requirement, but I know for a fact Steve ran Roy’s blood when he was in the hospital, and Anne is a licensed RN and has to have her blood tested periodically for communicable diseases, so I know you’re both OK. Do you want to wear a dress Anne?”

Anne thought about it for a second, then asked Bill what he could do in a couple of days. Bill told her that he could get a rental tux and a wedding gown in Anne’s size by Saturday, which was the soonest he could do the wedding anyway. Since today was Wednesday, and it was late in the afternoon, Bill would have to bust his tail to get everything in time. Anne asked Roy to plug his ears for a second, and gave Bill her measurements. Bill asked Roy for his pants and shirt size, then they realized Roy was still wearing a cast. He can’t wear a standard tuxedo with a cast. Bill said he would come up with something and not to worry. Bill told Anne that Jim the pilot would be there Friday Morning to pick them up, and to bring enough clothes to last the weekend. Anne remembered the rings, and asked Bill - she wanted 2 14kt yellow gold rings, hers should be a size 8, and his should be an 11. Roy commented on her “dainty fingers” and she replied that it was from throttling Steve as they were growing up. YIKES. She’d forgot to tell Steve.. Bill said he had all he needed, and told the two lovebirds to try and keep their hands off each other for a couple of days. Anne asked if Kissing is OK, and Bill laughed and said OK, as long as they behaved themselves. Bill signed off, and Anne switched frequencies to Steve’s radio at the clinic. “Anne calling Steve, ya there Bro?”

“10-4 Read you 5x5, go ahead Anne.”

“Guess what Steve, Roy and I are getting Married. And I want you to give me away.”

“Great Sis - when’s the wedding?”

“Saturday in town - everyone is invited. Make sure Bill has your measurements for your Tux.”

“Anything Else?”

“We’ll be flying in Friday, I’ll talk to you then.”

“OK, Anne - see you then, Bye.”

Anne turned off the power to the radio, then connected the bicycle generator to the battery, and started cranking. She kept at it for 10 minutes, then disconnected the generator, knowing the battery was fully charged again. Anne walked over to Roy, and gave him a hug and a kiss. Roy said, “I could get used to this.”

Anne said, “That’s only the appetizer, just wait until your wedding night.”

Roy’s eyes got as big as saucers, then he got an evil grin. “You can tease as much as you like, but we both have to wait for Saturday Night.”

Anne sat down heavily, “Don’t remind me - I’m getting weak in the knees just thinking about it. It’s been a while for this old lady, I’m not sure I can handle it.”

Roy said, “Old Lady - yeah right. If you’re an Old Lady, I must be Methuselah. It’s been so long for me, I hope it’s like riding a bike, otherwise, I might need a road map and driving directions.” They both laughed at that, then they sat down to just enjoy each other’s company until Anne realized what time it was, and scampered off to the kitchen to make dinner. Roy heard all kinds of noises emanated from the kitchen, and Anne finally emerged half an hour later, with a large pot of stew. She set it on the table, and Roy set the table, including some kerosene lamps that he lit as they were setting the table. When they were done eating, Anne cleaned the dishes, then they read the Bible together, said goodnight and went to sleep.

Chapter 24 - The Longest Day

Roy dressed quickly when he got up, then went out to check the smokehouse. Several pieces of jerky were done, so he took them down and brought them into the house. When he was finished, Anne was up and starting to make breakfast. She opened the drape between their rooms, then looked at the size of Roy's bed, and commented that if they were going to be married, they needed to build a bigger bed. Roy thought about that for a minute, told Anne "I have a better idea." and called the Mayor. The mayor did some checking, then called Roy back. Roy thanked the mayor and signed off.

"Roy, what was that all about?"

"It's a surprise."

"OK, so you want to be mysterious, I can handle it."

As Anne continued making breakfast, Roy snuck up behind her and wrapped his arms around her and kissed her neck."

"Down, Boy... You might start something we can't finish - Today."

"OK Anne, you're right - but just wait for our wedding night."

"I think it's best if we were busy doing other things today to keep our minds off it. Why don't you go fishing, and take the .22 with you. I'll keep busy around the house - but don't be gone too long."

"I'll water the garden on the way out, OK?"

"Sure Roy, at least the garden should be OK for a couple of days while we get hitched. Make sure you pack a week's worth of clothes."

"I don't think I own a week's worth of clothes. I just thought of something else I need to do. With the 2 of us here, we're going to need to do more laundry, and we need a clothesline to dry it on. For the remainder of the summer, we can run it outside, but during the winter, it's going to have to string inside the cabin, which means I'm going to need a couple of eye hooks."

Anne finished making breakfast - she made pancakes, sausage and eggs, which they ate with real maple syrup. Roy hadn't eaten a breakfast this good in a long time, and commented to Anne, "Wow - I'm really a lucky guy, I'm getting a wife who's an excellent kisser, likes to fish and hunt, can shoot better than me, and can cook too."

Anne got up and told Roy, "I don't know whether to kill you or kiss you, so I guess I'll kiss you." When they came up for air, Roy said he'd better get outside quick. He finished breakfast, drank his coffee, then Anne belted the fanny pack around his waist and slid the 22/45 into the belt of the fanny pack. Then she handed Roy the fishing rod and tackle box. She gave Roy a quick kiss on the cheek, and sent him on his way. As he walked toward the lake, Anne got busy cleaning and straightening what soon was to be her house. "It's not that bad - it just needs a woman's touch" - famous last words. Luckily for Roy, they didn't have any windows that she could decorate, so Anne satisfied her nesting drive by thoroughly sweeping the floor, organizing stuff, and making a list of things she wanted for the house.

Meanwhile, Roy had gone out to the garden, and finished watering the garden in half an hour, leaving him about 3 hours to fish before he thought he had better head back to the cabin. Roy made a note to himself to water the garden again on his way home, since things were starting to grow fast. Roy picked up his gear, and headed off to the lake. Roy dropped his stuff at his usual fishing spot, picked up a 4 foot long piece of wood that might come in handy to get back up with, then cleared off a fire ring, surrounded it with stones, then built a fire - all this one-handed. Roy set the canteen cup on a flat stone near the fire, and poured water from his canteen into it. He added a tea bag and a couple of packets of sugar. Roy carefully baited the hook on his fishing rod, opened the bail, and got ready to cast. Roy was really glad it was his left arm that was broke, because there was no way he could fish left handed. After he cast the lure way out into the lake, he switched the rod to his left hand, and held it carefully while he closed the bail and set the drag. Roy had time to kill, so he walked back closer to the fire, sat down carefully, then picked up the fishing rod, and drove the handle into the soft dirt to hold the tip up. Then he picked up his tea, and sat next to the fire drinking the tea. After watching the fire for a while, and no action on the lake, Roy got sleepy, and basically fell asleep sitting up.

Roy dreamt he was with Susan again, she was dressed in all white like their wedding day, but she was much brighter and almost hard to look at. Susan was speaking to Roy, "Roy, it's me - Susan. I'm so happy for you. You're right, Anne is an Angel, and you need to take care of her. She's a real tough cookie, but she's had bad luck with men, and will be as skittish as a colt for a while. You're going to have to be on your best behavior, and be very attentive to her needs - I'm not talking about flowers and candy, just help out around the house, and let her know you appreciate her, and that you love her."

"Susan, I still love you. I don't want to leave you, or forget about you."

"Roy, It's OK. I'll always be with you, and even though you love Anne, there's a part of you that we'll always share, your memories of us may fade, but you and I will always be in each other's hearts. You need Anne, you're going to live a long life, and you are going to need a companion. Don't worry about me, I'm in Heaven, and I'm so happy here with Jesus. You wouldn't believe the beauty of this place, it's indescribable. I'll see you soon, bye for now."

Roy said "Bye Susan" and all of a sudden she was gone, he was wide awake, and the line was

going out on the fishing rod. Roy made a mad grab with his left hand, got a grip on it, and started cranking back in. Luckily it was a small fish, or Roy would have had problems. Roy realized his arm was still too weak to fish properly, so when he finally pulled the fish in, he packed up, knocked down the fire, and drowned it with a couple of canteen cups of water, then picked up his gear and headed home. He stopped at the garden, filled the garden full of water twice, then closed off the water valve, picked up his stuff and headed home. Anne was seated at the table writing something when Roy came home.

“Hi dear, you’re home early.”

“I tried my hand at fishing, and I figured I’ll have to wait until the cast comes off to go fishing again. I had the weirdest dream, you want to hear about it?”

“Sure, wait a minute while I pour some tea I had on the stove - do you want a glass?”

“Thanks honey, lemon and sugar please.”

Anne brought 2 steaming mugs of tea into the dining room, set them on the table, and sat down. “Go Ahead - I’m all ears.”

“Anne, you remember those dreams I told you about with Susan - well I had another one this morning while I was out fishing. The funny thing was I was sitting down by the fire, and the next thing I know Susan’s standing in front of me wearing a glowing white garment. Susan told me she was happy for me, and that she wants us to get married and live happily together. She also told me to be considerate to you, and help out around the house, and not treat you like a maid.”

“That’s good, because I’m a little old to wear a French Maid’s outfit.”

They both got a good laugh at that, and Roy said “OK, I guess I won’t have to order the French Maid’s Outfit, but how about a nice negligee?”

Anne said, “OK, but any color but white - I prefer Red.”

They sipped their tea, and Roy asked Anne what she was writing when he came in. she told him it was a shopping list of stuff they needed. Roy explained they needed to watch the funds, because he wasn’t going to get any more money until he turned 60 besides the Annual Payment for Alaskan Residents. He told her he had about \$80 thousand left in the bank from selling his motor home. The insurance company had already paid off on the policy, so that was gone.

“Roy, I didn’t marry you for your money. It’s nice that we can buy stuff, and I promise to go easy, and not buy a bunch of frilly stuff.”

“I appreciate that Anne - You know, I really felt like fish for dinner, and I can’t fish one-handed. Would you mind going fishing with me?”

“Roy, I’d love to - let me get the fanny pack and the holsters first - just in case.”

Roy helped Anne slip on the shoulder holster and fanny pack. Anne slipped the 22/45 out of the shoulder holster and said, “Roy, this doesn’t look like any other .22 pistol I’ve seen - what are all the little holes around the barrel?”

“Anne - that’s called a suppressor, and if you want to find out how it works, let’s put it back in the holster, I’ll bring this box of .22 rounds so we can reload, and this empty tin can for you to shoot at.”

They carried everything out the cabin door, including the fishing gear. Roy tossed the can about 40 feet away and told Anne to shoot it with the 22/45.

Anne said, “Shouldn’t we wear earplugs?”

“Just trust me on this one, Ok Anne.”

Anne shrugged, pulled the 22/45 out of the holster, lined it up on the tin can, cleared the safety, put her finger on the trigger, and squeezed. There was a soft pop, and the can jumped about 6 inches. “Cool - it makes almost no noise.” Anne proceeded to quickly shoot the rest of the magazine into the tin can, which was dancing around every time Anne hit it - she never let it stop moving “This is Fun... How much ammo do you have?”

“I’ve got over 2,000 rounds in the cabin, but I only brought 100, and we need to save 30 rounds to reload both mags, so you can shoot 70 rounds, plus the rounds in the magazines.”

Anne emptied the first magazine, did a combat reload, and kept right on shooting. When she finished the second magazine, the tin can was shredded. Roy was amazed - Anne had just put 30 rounds into the tin can at about 40 feet, and she never let it stop moving until she had to reload. Roy handed her the box of CCI Minimags, and Anne quickly filled the mags, loaded the gun, cycled the action, and topped off the mag. She picked up the fishing rod and tackle box and continued to walk to the lake.

When they got to the lake, Roy quipped, “You know Anne, the way you shoot, I think they should have called you Annie as in “Annie Oakley”. Remind me never to get you mad at me.”

Anne laughed and told Roy that she and Ron used to spend hours plinking with Ron’s Ruger Mark II, and one of their favorite pastimes was to see how many times they could keep a tin can moving. With the 22/45’s high capacity mags, she got 5 extra shots. She used to shoot Ron’s 10/22 with Ramline 25 round banana magazines, and could keep a tin can dancing at 25 yards

for the whole magazine. They used to shoot varmints with the 10/22's out to 100 yards with a Simmons 3x12x50 AO Scope.

"Anne, you have a big advantage over me, I didn't start shooting until I got into hunting in my 30's when we moved to Wisconsin and all my friends hunted deer each fall, and went duck and turkey hunting. I can barely hit a deer-sized target at 300 yards, and you shoot a tiny little group into a log at 400 yards. When I heal up, I want to take shooting lessons if you want to teach me."

"Roy, I'd love to. Are you sure you can handle taking lessons from a girl?"

"A girl that shoots like Annie Oakley - you bet." Anne walked over and gave Roy a big hug and a kiss.

"You say the neatest things, Roy - now how about I catch dinner?" Anne picked up the fishing rod and tackle box, and walked to their fishing hole. Roy quickly baited the hook for Anne, then she cast way out into the lake. When the lure settled, she twitched the rod tip a couple of times, then the rod almost bent in half. Anne set the hook, then started reeling in the line. Eventually she landed a 10lb lake trout, and put it on the stringer, and cast back out into the lake. A few minutes later, she had another one hooked. As Anne was landing the second fish, Roy turned around and Oliver was staring at them from the edge of the forest, and Roy could see Francine and the pups right behind them. Roy tapped Anne on the shoulder, "I think Oliver and Family have shown up for dinner, feel like feeding the wolves?"

Anne unhooked the lake trout, and turned around, Roy whistled, and Oliver trotted right up to them, then Francine and the pups. They had grown a lot since the last time Roy had seen them. Anne plopped the fish at Oliver's feet, and Oliver proceeded to eat it right there.

"I think the rest of the family is hungry too - think you could land a couple more fish?"

Anne cast out into the lake and soon had another large fish on. She reeled in, and landed another large lake trout. This time, Francine and the pups walked up, and Anne laid the fish in front of them. Francine and the pups made short work of the fish, and Oliver was almost finished with his. Anne quickly cast out into the lake, and caught 3 more fish in short order. She gave one more to Oliver, and another one to Francine and the pups, then put the second fish on the stringer. When Oliver finished eating, he walked over to Roy and Anne, and sat down. They petted Oliver, and he looked into Anne's eyes as if he were saying "Thanks for the fish." Francine and the pups joined them as soon as they finished, and the pups played while Oliver and Francine sat there and got their ears scratched. Finally Oliver stood up and headed back to the woods. As his family trotted back to their den, Oliver turned around and looked at Roy and Anne, then followed his family. Anne picked up the stringer, the fishing rod and tackle box, turned to Roy and said, "Let's go home too." They walked hand in hand back to the cabin. When they got inside, Anne put all the stuff up, then quickly cleaned and filleted the fishes.

She dumped the guts in a pile outside, then got out the skillet, heated the lard, breaded the fillets, and fried the fish. Roy got the table set, lit the lantern, then went into the kitchen to wash his hands. Anne asked him if he wanted mashed potatoes with dinner, and he handed her a sauce pan that she filled half full of water and set on the stove to boil. She got down a box of instant mashed potatoes and a can of Butter Buds. When the water was boiling, she added 2 cups of Instant Mashed Potatoes, and a ¼ cup of Butter Buds, as well as a teaspoon of salt and a dash of pepper. She stirred the mixture until all the water was absorbed, then Roy handed her the plates. She put 2 large fillets on each plate and a mound of potatoes. They carried their plates over to the table, sat down, and Roy said Grace. “Father I thank you for this food, for the cook, and for everything you have done for us. Please continue to bless us, Amen.” Anne echoed Roy’s “Amen” and they ate dinner quietly for a while. Anne asked Roy, “I understand that Oliver is at least partly tame, but why did Francine and the pups come in too?”

“Anne - this goes back to the prehistoric ages when Man first domesticated wild dogs. For the longest time, Man and wolves were competitors, then over time, some dogs came closer and closer to Man’s fire, and eventually were fed by Man. When the dogs stayed around, they got fed the scraps from Man’s kills. The dogs eventually got used to living with Man, and soon ended up hunting with him, and even protecting Man and their families. See, Wolves and other dogs have a hierarchal society, and the Alpha Male is in charge of the pack. Domesticated dogs accepted Man as the Alpha male of the pack that included the dogs and Man’s family. Oliver and Francine obviously see me as the Alpha Male and you as the Alpha Female of their pack, so they trust us. Even their pups will treat us as the Alpha Pair.”

When they were finished with dinner, Anne cleaned the table, and Roy got out his Bible. He waited until Anne was seated next to him, then asked if it was OK to read to her out of the Bible. Anne said OK, then Roy turned to Genesis and said, “since we were talking about Man and Wolves, I thought you’d like to read Genesis, and hear how God created the Universe, and everything in it?” Anne nodded, so Roy started reading. When he got halfway through, Anne took over. They sat there reading the Bible and holding each other until bedtime. Anne stretched, and said “It’s getting late - we’ve got a lot to do tomorrow, and Jim should be here shortly after breakfast to take us to town. Goodnight Sweetheart, Pleasant Dreams.” With that, Anne kissed Roy on the lips, then walked into her bedroom, and shut the drape. Roy got undressed, blew out the lantern then slipped under the covers.

Chapter 25 - The Day Before

Roy woke early the next morning to the smell of bacon frying. He rolled out of bed, got dressed, then walked over to the curtain separating the rooms “Knock - knock.”

“It’s open silly, and I’m already dressed - sorry to disappoint you.”

“Well Anne, Guess what. Today’s the last day you have to worry about it. We’ll be married tomorrow, and I’ll definitely be seeing you in your Birthday Suit.”

“I didn’t know this was going to be formal - I didn’t bring a thing to wear.”

Roy walked around behind Anne, and gave her a big hug from behind, then kissed her on the neck.

“You better stop that, or I’m liable to burn breakfast, and break our promise to the Mayor.”

Roy kissed her one more time, then patted her butt for good measure. “I’ll try to keep my hands off you until tomorrow night. I’ll go in the other room where it’s safe.”

Anne finished breakfast, and Roy brought her the plates. She made pancakes, bacon, and eggs for breakfast, since they would be too busy to eat lunch today, and she figured she had better feed Roy pretty well, since the way he was behaving, he was going to need his strength. They sat down together to eat breakfast, and just as they finished, Anne heard the roar of Jim’s plane coming in for a landing. Good thing they packed last night. Anne quickly did the dishes, then knocked down the fire in the stove just to be safe. Jim had taxied up to their door, and was walking through the front door. “Where’s the two lovebirds? You guys ready yet? We’ve got a lot of stuff to do, and little time, so let’s get going.” Jim shook Roy’s hand, and gave Anne a big hug, then they grabbed their luggage, and boarded the plane. Anne helped Roy buckle in, and as soon as they were buckled in, Jim revved the motor, turned the plane around, and taxied out to the lake, then turned downwind so he would be running into the wind for takeoff. As soon as he reached the end of the lake, he turned facing upwind, revved the throttle to 100% power, and charged into the wind. The ride was very bumpy until they built up speed, and the wings started generating lift. They were still not flying until the very last minute when Jim pulled the yoke back into his lap, and cleared the tree line at the end of the lake by 10 feet. Jim continued to gain altitude until it was safe to turn back to Allakaket. Jim banked the plane until they were facing south, and headed toward Allakaket. Half an hour later, they were on final for the town, and Jim radioed ahead so the Mayor could meet them with his Jeep. They landed with a thud on the lake, and Jim taxied right up to the shore, and stopped next to the Mayor’s Jeep. Anne opened the door on her side, Roy unbuckled his belt, and got out, and Jim handed the Mayor their bags. Jim told Roy he had a couple of trips to make, but he would see them again for dinner, and jumped back in his plane, and as soon as they were clear, started up the prop,

turned and taxied back to the lake, then took off. Roy and Anne got in the Mayor's Jeep for the ride to town. the mayor told Roy he had booked them separate rooms for tonight, and Anne looked at the Mayor, who said, "Don't worry, I booked the Bridal Suite for tomorrow night - I assume you guys didn't want to be disturbed. Have you kept your promise so far."

Anne answered for both of them, "It hasn't been easy, but we survived so far."

Roy laughed and told the Mayor, "This is one of those times I wish I didn't have a busted wing."

The Mayor told him, "I'm sure you'll figure something out." Then they arrived at the Hotel. The Mayor took their bags, and showed them to their rooms. While Roy was busy getting situated, the mayor showed Anne the dress he was able to rent for her. It was a lovely off-white dress with a veil and short train, just as she had requested. They walked out of Anne's room, and locked the door behind them. Roy had opened his closet, and was amazed to find a tuxedo hanging there. Upon closer inspection, Roy noticed the left sleeve had snaps all the way to the shoulder, but they were so well hidden that he couldn't see them from 6 feet away. Roy walked into the hall, shook the mayor's hand and told him, "I don't know how you did it, but you managed to find a tuxedo for me to wear." Anne squealed and gave the mayor a big hug. With that out of the way, they walked into the hotel's kitchen where the owner was hard at work.

"I wanted you to review the menu for tonight and for tomorrow's reception."

Anne picked up the menu and was reading, Roy read over her shoulder:

Dinner

Prime Rib
Butterflied Breaded Deep Fried Shrimp
Mashed Potatoes
Gravy
Mixed Vegetables with garlic butter sauce
Rolls and Biscuits
Baked Apple Pie and Ice Cream

Reception

Cold Cut Platter

Cheese Platter

Veggie Platter

Hoagie Rolls

Mayonnaise, Mustard, Ketchup, Vinegar, Oil, Seasonings

3-tier Wedding Cake (vanilla) with Cream Cheese Frosting

Champagne

Anne looked at the menus, then at Roy who was nodding vigorously “Yes”.

Anne turned to the Hotel Owner, and asked him what all this would cost. He told her he normally charges \$500 for enough food to feed all the townspeople food like this, but he would write off half of it, and their rooms as his wedding present to them. Roy told the mayor to make sure the Hotel owner got paid out of his account. The hotel owner smiled and said thanks. When they were finished, Anne and Roy walked over to the Clinic to see Steve. When they opened the door, Steve nearly flattened Anne, then swept her off her feet in a big bear hug. “Anne, I’m SO happy for you. I expected you would stay with Roy a while, and while my back is turned, you two fall in love. Roy, Congratulations. I know you’ll make Anne happy. I can’t wait for tomorrow. I wish Ron were here to give Anne away, but I’ll be honored to stand in his place.” Steve was shaking Roy’s hand vigorously, until he noticed Roy’s pained expression. “Oops - Not a good idea for the Doctor to wreck his own work.” Steve invited them over to the pub for a drink, and something to eat, Steve missed breakfast since he had an emergency. “Roy, you’ve got to try the Mooseburgers. They taste just like hamburger, and Bill puts a special seasoning blend in them and the fries that he won’t tell anyone about.” With that, they walked over to the pub, and were immediately shown a table.

“Roy, remember - this is where we first met. Who would have guessed in two months after that, we’d be getting married.” Anne leaned over and kissed Roy on the lips.

Steve looked at his menu. “OK if I order for us?”

Anne said “Sure Steve, go ahead.”

When the waitress came over, Steve said “3 Mooseburgers, Medium Well, with Moose Fries, and a pitcher of Moose Drool.” She noted the order on her pad, walked back to the cook, and clipped the order next on the wheel. She brought the pitcher and 3 frosty glasses, then 10 minutes later, their order. When the waitress left, Steve started talking about joining the Air Force and becoming a Para Rescue Jumper. Roy asked him, “Isn’t that Dangerous?”

“Yes, it’s the most dangerous job in the military, more PJ’s get killed in training than any other branch, proportionally. The training is dangerous, but when you come out on the other end, your job is to save another life. They especially recruit young single ER qualified docs, so I was a prime candidate for the recruiters. My obligation to the State of Alaska ends this month, and the week after that, I report for training. I’ve always been an adrenalin junkie, and this is the biggest rush in the Armed Forces. We are Airborne qualified, dive qualified, and go through the same training the 11 Bravo do so we can rescue a downed pilot under enemy fire. With my MD and 4 years ER training, they are waiving most of the medical training requirements, but I still have to take the specialized training to learn how the Air Force does it under field conditions.”

“Steve, I know telling you BE CAREFUL isn’t an option, but please don’t take any unnecessary risks, I don’t want to lose you too.”

“Don’t worry Sis, if my number comes up, it won’t matter whether I’m here in Alaska, or behind enemy lines somewhere rescuing a downed pilot. You know I love you, but this is something I have to do. Maybe I’ll settle down when I get it out of my system. Anyway, tomorrow’s the big day. We should probably talk to the Mayor about the ceremony when we finish here.”

“Steve, I hate to sound like a televangelist, but I need to know where you stand spiritually. For Anne’s and my peace of mind. If you don’t want to discuss it, it’s OK.”

“Roy, it’s funny you should mention that. I was raised Methodist, but fell away while in college. When I got to the ER, my faith was renewed by what I can only call miracles. Patients who should have died, were even clinically dead on arrival, but somehow survived. Several of them related visions they had while clinically dead that frankly rocked me to the core. One gang-banger described a scene of indescribable suffering and torment, where a young mother described seeing a place of peace and contentment. Since then, I’ve renewed my relationship with God, and even attended church when I could.”

“Steve, you never told me this.”

“Anne, I didn’t know if you were ready to receive it. I mean we both were living sinful lives while we lived in Texas.”

“Well, I’m ready now, Roy’s been reading the Bible to me, and explaining things to me. I recently become a Christian, but don’t think I understand it all.”

At this Roy spoke up, “Maybe we should continue this conversation at the Mayor’s, I’m sure he’ll have something to contribute.” They had finished eating, so they got up, and Steve paid the tab, then they walked over to the Mayor’s office. As they walked into the Mayor’s Office, he got up, shook Steve and Roy’s hands, and gave Anne a big hug. Roy spoke up, “Before we get started, Anne has some questions for you, she’s a new Christian, and wanted to ask you.”

“OK, let me get my Bible, and I’ll answer any questions you have. OK, Anne, Fire away.”

“First of all, Roy lead me through what he called “the sinner’s prayer” a couple of weeks ago, and I felt such relief, but when he read the Bible to me, I didn’t understand some things.”

“Anne, none of us profess to know all the Bible, learning the Bible is a lifelong process. There are some tools that can help your understanding. A Strong’s Dictionary helps with translation questions. You see, the Original Bible was written in Aramaic, Hebrew and Greek. As you know there are two major books in the Bible, the Old and New Testament. The Old Testament dealt with the time before the birth of Jesus, and the New Testament dealt with the time after Jesus’ birth. The Old Testament was written in Ancient Aramaic and Hebrew, the language of the people called Jews, and the New Testament was written in Greek. No one has spoken Aramaic for centuries, and that caused problems when the Bible Scholars first attempted to translate the Bible into Latin, and later into English. As a result, translation errors have cropped up due to the meanings of words changing over the centuries, and Strong’s does the best job of illuminating the original meaning of the word in Greek or Aramaic. Also, there are Concordances written by Theologians and Bible Scholars that amplify sections of the Bible, and attempt to shed light on various passages. Hopefully those books Roy ordered are in the shipment Jim is getting for you today. When you get them, either Roy or I can show you how to use them, and it will make things much easier.”

“OK, but some of the passages don’t make sense, take for example John 1:1.”

“Let me get my Strong’s out, and I’ll show it to you. <reaches up onto bookcase, pulls down large book> OK, turn to John 1:1 in my Bible and read it please.”

- 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- 2 He was in the beginning with God.
- 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.
- 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.
- 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

“Ok, Anne, now let’s open Strong’s. The first question you probably have is the first sentence, right?” {Anne Nods head} Let’s open Strong’s and find the answer. First we look up the word in the front, in this case we’re looking for the word “Word”. <Thumbing pages> Ok, now that

you've found that, look up John 1:1 under WORD. There's a number there that corresponds to the Greek definition of that word. <writes number down> Now, let's turn to that number in the Greek dictionary in back. <thumbing pages> Now, read the definition."

"I see it, in this case I think the word "Word" is referring to Jesus Christ. OK, I get it now, they are saying in the beginning, God and the Word, meaning Jesus, were one, and they created the Universe. Thanks, Bill - Now I don't feel like such an Idiot."

"Anne, No one who believes in God and his Son are idiots. You will understand the Bible, it just takes time, and the proper tools. It took me 10 years to study for the Ministry, and I'm still learning. Now let's adjourn to the chapel to practice for your wedding."

"Bill, wait a minute, Jim isn't here."

"Don't worry Roy, all he has to do is stand next to you and give you the rings. I'll talk to him later if he doesn't make it back in time." With that, they walked next door to the small church that also doubled as the Town Hall, except now it was decorated, and looked like a small country chapel. "Ok, Roy, let's take it from the top. I enter from the side door, you walk down the aisle and stand off to the left, then Steve escorts Anne down the aisle, hands her off to you - I forgot, Anne what do you want to do with your veil - leave it down for the ceremony and lift for the kiss, or raise it when Steve hands you off, or have Steve lift it?"

"I'd like to have it up for the ceremony, so is it OK if I lift my veil when Steve hands me off?"

"Sure, and I guess that means I'll have to leave the "Obey" part out as well."

"You better believe it Reverend." <Laughter>

"OK, now we're up to the point where you and Anne face the altar and hold hands, <they turn toward Altar and hold hands> I've got the readings you wanted me to do marked. I'll read the readings then ask each of you if you consent to be married, and give a brief instruction, then you'll repeat your vows, kiss, and I announce you as Husband and Wife. You're taking Roy's last name, right?"

"Of course - By the way, what is your last name?"

"Just in case you're in the wrong room, My name's Roy Williams."

"Anne Williams, I like that."

Great, now that we've got that settled, why don't you two walk down the aisle together, and we're finished here until tomorrow at noon. Just remember, your rehearsal dinner is at 5:00 at the lodge. Roy, that's when Mickey's little hand is on the 5 and his big hand in on the 12."

“Of all the luck, we get a preacher that thinks he’s a comedian. See you at 5 Mayor.”

Anne turned to Roy, “We’ve got a couple of hours to kill, what do you want to do?”

“Anne, the way I’m feeling, we should stay outdoors and in public.”

“Roy, is it just me, or are you turning into a Horny Old Fart?”

“I guess you’ll just have to see tomorrow night.” <Evil Grin>

“Ok, you dirty old man, let’s go for a walk.”

They spent the rest of the afternoon walking, holding hands, talking, and occasionally kissing. Roy hoped he could control himself until tomorrow night. Finally, five o’clock rolled around, and they headed to the lodge. All the townspeople were there, and everyone shook Roy’s hand, and gave Anne hugs. Roy hadn’t seen most of these people before, but Anne seemed to know everyone, and introduced them to Roy, and explained to him who they were (her teacher from school, etc.) Mercifully the receiving line was short, and Roy was able to sit down with Anne at the head of the table. The townspeople sat down, the Hotel owner and his servers brought out several huge Prime Rib Roasts, set them on a side tray to be sliced to order, and put all the rest of the food on the table. When the food was on the table, the Mayor tapped his wine glass to get everyone’s attention, gave a brief speech welcoming Roy, and asking the village’s blessing on their upcoming wedding. With that, they bowed their heads, and the Mayor said grace, then they passed the food and the bottles of wine. The server walked to Roy’s right, and asked him how he liked his Prime Rib. Roy told him Thick and medium rare with all the trimmings. Anne concurred, and soon two huge plates of prime rib appeared in front of them. Roy looked puzzled, then turned to Anne, and whispered into her ear. She quickly cut her meat, then took Roy’s plate, and cut his prime rib for him since Roy’s cast prevented him from using his left hand, then she set his plate back in front of him. Roy piled the horseradish and sour cream onto his plate, and got a ramekin of Au jus from the server; put a pile of mashed potatoes and a bunch of fried shrimp and smaller piles of vegetables and the other fixings onto his plate. Anne turned to him giggling and whispered, “Eating for Two?” Roy almost choked on a forkful of mashed potatoes.

“I’m kind of old for that, but if you want kids, I think I can manage.”

Anne turned beet red, and whispered back, “You horny old goat. I’m sure you’d love your part of the scenario. I guess I better wear you out tomorrow night so I can get some peace. At your age, that shouldn’t take too long.”

“We’ll see who cries “UNCLE” first tomorrow night.”

The mayor noticed all the whispering on their end of the table, and said, “Enough of that, you

two - if you're going to whisper, speak up so the rest of us can hear." At that, they both turned bright red, and the Mayor knew what they had been talking about. All conversation stopped for a minute, and several people were giggling. Finally, conversation resumed at the table, so Anne and Roy were able to resume eating without any further embarrassment. Roy noticed he hadn't seen Jim for a while, and he wasn't in the receiving line, when Jim showed up, apologizing for being late, explaining that he was making a delivery, sat down and filled a plate with food. Roy wondered what Jim was up to, but didn't ask. Later, when dinner broke up around 10:00pm, Anne walked Roy to his room, kissed him goodnight, and fought herself to keep from just walking into Roy's room and attacking him. She told Roy that he shouldn't see her the morning of the wedding, besides she was going to be busy, so he should plan on eating breakfast by himself. Just make sure he was at the church, dressed, and in position by noon, or else she'd have to hunt him down with a 12ga Shotgun. Roy assured her he'd be there, and no need for the shotgun. Roy hoped the Mayor and Jim could help him get dressed, since he couldn't put on the top half of the tuxedo by himself. Roy kissed Anne goodnight, and walked back out to the front to see if he could catch the Mayor. Luckily, he was still there, helping out. Roy asked him if they could help him get dressed tomorrow, and the Mayor told him just to bring his tux to the church at 11:00 and they could get dressed in the nursery room next to the main chapel. Roy thanked him, and headed back to his room, got undressed, and went right to sleep. Roy was exhausted by now, and figured he'd need his sleep. Roy spent the evening dreaming of Anne and Susan. Meanwhile, Anne had gotten undressed, and fell into bed. She was out like a light within minutes.

Chapter 26 - Roy gets Hitched

Roy woke at 9:00 the next morning - then it hit him “I’m getting Married Today.” The first thing he did was say a special prayer, and thanked God for today, for Anne, and for Susan. He knew he was doing the right thing, but he was still nervous. Then he remembered he was even more nervous when he married Susan. He rolled out of bed, used the bathroom, brushed his teeth, and got dressed. He walked out to the dining room, and there was a note on the door saying it was closed due to the wedding that afternoon. Instead, there was a sign pointing around the corner to the day room, and they had set up a breakfast bar with hot food, cereal, muffins, juice and coffee. Roy picked up a tray, set a plate, cup and utensils on it, then set it on the slider bars in front of the breakfast bar. He spooned in some scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, and pancakes, grabbed a bran muffin, poured some orange juice and coffee, and sat down at the table. The mayor and Jim were sitting down eating when Roy sat down next to them.

“You ready for the big day?”

“Ready as I’ll ever be - did you talk to Jim about this afternoon?”

“Jim’s an old hand, this is his 4th wedding as a Best Man, and so he knows what to do. Lets’ finish up breakfast, then it will just about be time to get ready.”

“Anyone seen Anne?”

“No, but several of the womenfolk were headed to her room - and I saw someone bringing a tray of food into her room.” They ate breakfast without further conversation, and then they sat around until just before 11:00, and then Roy went to his room to get his tuxedo and carried it to the chapel to get dressed. Roy figured he’d need the extra time. When he got there, there was 3 bags with Bill, Jim and Roy’s names on them. Roy opened his bag, and there was a pair of shoes, socks, the cummerbund, a bow tie, and a carnation boutonniere with a floral pin to pin to his lapel. Roy hung his tux on the hanger, then sat down to wait for Jim and the Mayor. A couple of minutes later, they filed in and when they all gathered in a huddle, the Mayor led them in prayer, then they got dressed. The Mayor and Jim helped Roy get into his tuxedo, then they got dressed. Roy was wondering why the Mayor was wearing a tux, and he told Roy the congregation had decided not to have Bill wear vestments, that they preferred him wearing a suit, and he always wore a tux for weddings. Roy thought that was a good idea, and didn’t comment further. They finished dressing at 11:45. Jim excused himself saying he needed to escort people into the chapel. He told Roy to be ready to go by 11:55, and walked out the door. 10 minutes later, Jim came for Roy, who got up, smoothed his pants, and walked out to stand next to the altar with Jim. Then the Mayor entered and stood at the Altar. Finally at 12:00 sharp, someone pressed a button on a cassette player, and the familiar strains of Mendelssohn’s Wedding March echoed through the church, as the doors opened, the audience rose to their

feet, and Anne appeared at the doorway. She was radiant in her Ivory wedding dress, and Steve was walking next to her with his hand tucked into her right elbow. The aisle was barely big enough in the small chapel, but Roy didn't notice, all he could see was Anne. When she made her way to the front of the church, she smiled at Roy, and he felt like a 4th of July fireworks display was going off. Roy extended his right hand, Anne reached out with her left, and they clasped hands. Anne turned to Steve, gave him a kiss on the cheek, and Steve sat in the front row. Then they turned to face Bill, who had his Bible in hand, and was looking at the two of them. As the music stopped, Reverend Bill started the service with the eternal words "Dearly Beloved..."

Roy didn't really hear the words, he was too entranced by Anne. She was so beautiful, and his heart was so full of love that he thought it would burst. Finally, it dawned on Roy that Bill was saying something important, and he needed to pay attention. "Do you Roy, wish to pledge your life to Anne, to be her husband for the rest of your life?"

Roy responded, "Yes, I Do."

Then Bill asked Anne the same question, somehow she found her voice, and her response was a strong "Yes."

Bill continued in his readings, and when he was finished, he stepped back, and a couple from the back of the church came up the outside aisle with a guitar and a mandolin. They sat in two folding chairs that were set off to the side, and got ready, then they sang the famous duet from Fiddler on the Roof, "Sunrise Sunset". Even though he appeared to be in his 60's, he still had a powerful Baritone voice that accompanied his Ovation 12-string folk guitar as beautifully as his wife's Alto voice accompanied her mandolin. When they were finished, there wasn't a dry eye in the congregation. When everyone finally finished honking and wiping, Bill got to the good part. He turned to Roy, and asked him to repeat his wedding vows to him, then asked Anne to repeat her wedding vows to him, then asked Jim for the rings, and gave a brief instruction of the symbolism of the round gold rings they were exchanging. Roy put the ring on Anne's finger, then she put a ring on Roy's finger.

Then Bill said the most important words of the ceremony, "By your exchange of vows, and exchange of rings before God and these witnesses, by the Authority of God Almighty and the State of Alaska, I now declare you Husband and Wife. What God has joined, Let No Man put Asunder. I now present to you Roy and Anne Williams. You may kiss the bride. Anne wrapped her arms around Roy and put a lip lock on him that he had never felt before. Bill was worried they were going to pass out when finally they came up for air. Then they turned, and as the strains of the Trumpet Voluntary echoed through the chapel, they walked down the aisle to the applause of everyone in the church. They stood in the vestibule while the church emptied, then the townspeople formed two lines and pelted them with rice as they walked over to the Hotel for the reception. The owner of the hotel greeted them, and opened the door to the dining room. The room had been decorated, and looked fabulous. There was a huge 3 tier cake in the

corner, and in another corner, a pile of wedding presents, and some cards. They had a buffet table all set up. The hotel owner motioned for the Bride and Groom to go through the buffet line first, then seated them at the head table. When everyone was seated, Jim as the Best Man toasted the couple and acted as MC for the reception. Several people brought cameras, and by the time they were finished, Roy and Anne were seeing stars. Finally, it came time to cut the cake and open their wedding gifts. Roy was surprised by the number of cards vs. gifts until he opened some of the cards, and they mentioned that Jim and a friend of his had made several trips Friday delivering and setting up the gifts, including a new King bed from the Mayor and the Hotel owner, a washboard and wringer, a large galvanized tub, and a few other large items. Then they opened the gifts and found a salt shaker and a pepper mill, a cast iron skillet and Dutch oven, a tea kettle, and a coffee pot, a large stainless Stock Pot for making soup, a set of knives in a butcher's block, a maple cutting block, a 4-piece set of cutlery, a 4-piece set of plates, bowls, and cups, and finally a His and Her's set of towels. Jim told them that they had also delivered all the stuff he had ordered including a new rifle, and the set of pistols and the custom shoulder holster. Roy wished he could get the cast off sooner, since he wanted to go home and try out his new toys, but first they needed to retire to their Honeymoon suite. Anne and Roy got up to leave, and were mobbed by the wedding guests. Finally, they were alone in the honeymoon suite.

“So, Anne Williams, do you want to help me get undressed, or are you going to attack me with my clothes on.”

Anne walked toward him - and we will draw a curtain over what happened after that.

Chapter 27 - The Morning After

Roy awoke the next morning next to Anne, who was positively beaming.

“Anne - What Happened?”

“Roy, you made me the happiest woman on the planet - we’ll have to do this more often.”

“I hate to tell you this, but if I do THAT more often, you’re going to kill me.”

“OK Roy, I promise, no more than 3 times a night.”

“Anne, I don’t know if I can. I’m not a young man anymore - you on the other hand are INSATIABLE...”

“Roy, I wouldn’t exactly say that. I’m definitely satisfied.. I think it has just been a long time for both of us.”

“Good thing you’re a nurse - I thought I was going to need CPR for a minute there. Anne, can I just hold you for a while, or are you starving?”

“I think I can safely wait until noon. Oh, Roy - I love you so much. I’ve got some very good news for you. Remember the other day when you were worried about our finances? Well, you don’t need to worry any more. Ron had a \$250,000.00 Life Insurance policy that he got when he was in the military - they paid part of the premium, so he got enough to make sure both Steve and I could be taken care of and have a good education in case something should happen to him. Anyway, when the FAA declared him Missing and Presumed Dead, we filed the paperwork with the Insurance Company, and six months later, he was declared legally dead, and the insurance company settled. Steve got \$125,000.00 and I got \$125,000.00. I used some of it to pay off debts, but I still have over 100 grand in the bank here in Allakaket. Between my 100 grand and your 80 grand, we can live off the interest easily up here.”

“Anne, that is so generous of you to offer, but you don’t have to.”

“Roy, I WANT to. Please...It would make things much easier.”

“OK, Anne, We’ll talk to the mayor about combining our two accounts into a joint account. Right after I tickle you. <Serious Giggling and Laughter>

Later that afternoon, when they finally got out of bed and got dressed, they went into the dining room, where they were still serving a buffet breakfast for Sunday Morning. Roy was famished, and piled a lot of food on his tray. Anne looked at the mountain of food, and giggled “I guess I

really did wear you out.”

“I’m trying to regain my strength.” Anne went through the line, then they sat at the table and ate. Half an hour later, Jim walked up and asked them if they are ready to go home. Roy told him as soon as they had finished breakfast and packed. Jim said that would work great for him since it was going to take at least an hour to load the plane. When they finished eating, they quickly packed, checked out of the hotel, and were seriously confused when their bill was stamped “Paid in Full” and signed by the owner. He just happened to walk by, and Roy thanked him for his hospitality. He told Roy that the Mayor had already paid for the entire weekend’s festivities out of Roy’s account, so everything was paid for. That reminded Roy that they needed to talk with the Mayor, and walked over to his office.

“Bill, Anne and I need to convert our separate accounts to a joint account.”

“I already took care of the paperwork -Anne tipped me off. All you have to do is sign a new signature card, Roy you sign first, and Anne right below.”

After they signed, the mayor offered to drive them out to the airfield, and they piled in the Mayor’s Jeep. When they got to the airfield, Jim had just finished loading, and took their bags. They thanked the Mayor, and got on board the plane. Anne belted Roy in, then buckled her seatbelt and locked the door. Jim jumped into his seat, locked the door, buckled his belt, put on his radio headset, and checked to make sure he was clear, then started the engine. When the engine had warmed up, and the prop was spinning at the proper RPM, he contacted the tower for permission to take off. The tower said there was no traffic in the vicinity, so they were free to taxi and take off anytime. Jim told them to hang on, pushed the throttle to take-off setting, and quickly taxied out to the lake. By the time he hit the lake, he was starting to accelerate rapidly, then reached lift-off speed as he reached the end of the lake, and pulled the yoke back into his lap. They cleared the trees by 50 feet, and Jim kept the nose level to gain airspeed, then trimmed for a gentle climb to 5,000 ft for the trip home. Before they knew it, they were circling the lake to land, and Jim touched down with barely a splash, and a soft bump as the pontoons made contact with the lake. They taxied over to the end of the lake where Roy and Anne’s new house stood, and they quickly taxied to the front door. Roy immediately noticed something was different - there was a window next to the front door.

As soon as Jim had stopped, and shut down the plane, they hopped out, and walked over to their house. Roy stared openmouthed at his cabin. There were 2 windows. Jim noticed Roy’s stunned look, and said that while they were gone getting married, Anne thought it would be nice to have 2 windows in the house. Jim and his friend, who was a master carpenter, installed them while they did everything else. Roy caught on to that last phrase, and was almost afraid to ask. When they opened the door, Roy noticed the door opened inward, actually fit, and locked. It was also heavily weatherproofed. When he stepped inside, he hardly recognized the place. Jim explained they needed to move a few things to make way for the king size bed. Roy’s food locker was missing, and the table had been pushed over next to the wall. Where Roy’s old bed

used to be was a new King Size bed with head and foot boards. Roy's moose hides that were on the bed were rolled up on the table, and the Bearskin was now a quilt over the bed. As Roy continued into the cabin, there was another window in the second room, and the room was clean and tidy, with the exception of all the boxes from their wedding gifts that were stacked in the corner. Roy noticed a new Rubbermaid container, and saw that it was labeled "Jerky Storage" - So that's where it got off to. In the back of the room, he noticed a curtain like a shower curtain, but dark, and when he opened it, he saw the commode he had purchased earlier. He figured Anne wanted some privacy if she needed to use the facilities during the winter. Roy was happy with the windows - they let in a lot of light. Roy thought that they would make it colder in the winter too until he spotted the heavy curtains hanging from the brass curtain rod over the window. He also noticed the panes were extra thick, and asked Jim about that.

"They're special windows for rural Alaska - they don't open, the outer layer is scratch-resistant hard polycarbonate to prevent freezing and breakage, they are triple pane, and are Argon gas filled for insulation. These windows are better insulators than the logs around them."

"Thanks Jim, what do I owe you?"

"Nothing - just part of my wedding gift to you two."

Jim walked outside to finish unloading their stuff. Anne turned to Roy and said, "I hope you're not mad."

"Anne, I could never be mad at you. I just didn't know that windows like that existed. It's so much brighter in here. I was living in a cave before this. Now I only need to light the fireplace for heat, not necessarily light. I used to read my Bible by firelight. Let's go see what Jim is bringing in." They walked into the main room as Jim put some boxes on the table. Roy gleefully noticed one was from his gunsmith, and one was from his knife maker. Also the box from the Christian bookstore was there - hopefully it contained Anne's Bible, the Concordances, and a copy of Strong's Dictionary. Finally Jim said that all the boxes were in, then brought their suitcases. Jim shook Roy's hand, and gave Anne a hug and a kiss on the cheek, then walked back to his plane and left. Roy opened the box from his gunsmith, and took out a Colt Anaconda with a 4 inch barrel, target sights, and stainless steel construction, then digging deeper, a Ruger 22/45 with a note attached - "Roy, I'm giving this to you and Anne, it is fitted with an integral suppressor, and has been sighted in for 50 yards. Since I have my Class II manufacturer's permit, I made this, and I'm carrying it on the books as a demo gun. It's been used by Animal Control officers in several states to put down injured animals. They liked it so much, they usually bought one for each officer. Anyway, since this is my demo gun, there is no paper trail to you." Roy dug deeper, and there was a custom DeSantis double shoulder holster for the Anaconda and the 22/45. Roy turned to Anne and said, "This one's Mine." then opened the box from his knife maker. It contained a duplicate of his Frontier Bowie, and a classical skinner with a gut hook, both in ATS-34 and titanium nitride coated with Kydex sheaths. Roy handed these to Anne, and dug into the other box, and found a fanny pack

just like his. Anne took the knife sheaths and threaded them onto the fanny pack belt opposite the military canteen. Next he opened the box from the Christian Book store, took out a beautiful leather covered New King James Bible by Zondervan, and a set of Concordances, and a Strong's Dictionary. Anne squealed, and gave Roy a Bear Hug when she saw the Bible and the books. Anne opened the rest of the wedding presents, and found a place for them. Roy looked longingly at the shoulder holster, then at his left arm with a cast and a sling, and realized that he couldn't wear a shoulder holster until the sling and cast came off. "Rats."

"What's wrong Roy?"

"I've got a new toy that I can't play with until my cast and the sling come off."

"You poor widdo boy - got a brand new toy that you can't play with." Anne got right in his face and whispered "You can play with this toy any time you like."

"Anne, You're a Brazen Hussy. Ease up girl - I fully well intend to keep you occupied, it's just I have to wait another month before I can wear a shoulder holster. No offense, but you've been living in cities and towns for the last couple of years, and your senses aren't as acute as mine are. The two bears I killed were less than 40 yards away, and I had to practically draw and shoot in one instant. I just don't want something to happen to you or me because I couldn't protect you."

"Before you get your britches all bunched up, let me check something real quick."

Anne came back a few minutes later holding a belt holster that looked like it would hold a .44 Magnum just like Roy's. "Jim gave this to me when Ron died; It's the holster from his .44 Magnum that he used before he got a shoulder holster." Anne handed it to Roy, who accepted it with a tear in his eyes.

"Anne, I don't know what to say."

"Roy, Ron always protected me, so I think he'd like it if you were able to protect me too."

Roy broke down crying, and held Anne for the longest period. Finally, they dried their eyes, and Roy told Anne "Anne, you're perfectly capable of defending yourself; I just want to have the capability to protect you if I can. I'll treasure this, and when I get out of this sling, I'll give it back to you, and you can put it in a special place." Roy made room on his pistol belt that carried his fanny pack, knife kit, and canteen, threaded the belt through the loops of the holster, then took the Colt Anaconda out of the shoulder holster, checked to make sure it was loaded, found it was unloaded, opened the box of .44 Magnum rounds the gunsmith shipped with the Anaconda, and loaded six rounds into the cylinder, closed the cylinder, and holstered the gun. Roy breathed a sigh of relief, and Anne gave him another hug.

Since they were done unpacking, Roy suggested they water the garden, and go fishing. Anne got the fishing rod and tackle box, and met Roy at the door. She set everything down as Roy handed her the shoulder holster and fanny pack. She adjusted her shoulder holster like she had been wearing one all her life, then picked up the fanny pack, and belted it around her waist. It was just like Roy's except she had a Skinner blade instead of a <skip> like Roy's. She picked up the fishing rod and tackle box, Roy opened the door for her, let her go through first, then shut the door behind them. They walked to the garden. Roy was surprised how fast things grew in Alaska - some of the plants were visibly taller. He opened the gate valve, flooded the garden, then blocked off the center ditches to water the outer ditches. When he had watered both twice, he shut off the water, set the board down, and walked over to Anne, took her hand in his, and walked the rest of the way to the lake.

When they got to the lake, they turned North to their favorite fishing spot. Anne put the tackle box down, baited the hook, and cast the line way out into the lake. Several minutes later, she was reeling in a large fish, when a noise behind them alerted Roy. The largest bear he had ever seen was maybe 50 feet behind them. It was standing on its hind legs, and looked ready to charge. Roy knew he'd never get his gun out in time, when all of a sudden, off to his right in the bush Oliver emerged from the treeline, and charged the bear, growling and snarling. The Bear turned to face the new challenge, and Roy, seeing his opportunity, grabbed the butt of his Colt Anaconda, pulled it from the holster and in one smooth movement, drew it one-handed and pointed it at the bear. As the bear turned toward Oliver, the front sight of the Anaconda steadied on the ear of the bear. Roy knew a head shot with a bear wasn't a good idea, but it was the only shot open, and he hoped he could shoot the bear right through the ear canal and penetrate the extremely thick skull. Right as he pulled the trigger, Anne screamed, Oliver leapt at the bear, and the Anaconda roared. When the smoke cleared, the bear was dead in its tracks. Anne had her gun out and pointed at the bear, and Oliver was looking confused. Roy walked up to Oliver carefully, talking quietly to the very enraged wolf.

"Easy there Oliver, it's OK. Good Boy Oliver. Oliver.."

Finally, Oliver looked at Roy, then at the now dead bear, and sat down.

Anne walked up, "What happened Roy?"

"A Bear snuck up on us while you were fishing. I just heard the warning growl as he got ready to charge. Oliver must have been waiting in the treeline hoping for a handout, and when the Bear threatened us, Oliver acted to protect us by attacking the bear. While the bear was distracted, I was able to draw and fire. I got a lucky shot and shot the bear right through the ear canal. I didn't have enough time to wait for a better shot, since that bear would have mauled Oliver. Anyway, looks like we've got a bear to skin, and you had better reel that fish in before he breaks the line."

Anne turned quickly to the fishing rod, and finished reeling the fish in. As Anne unhooked it,

she called Oliver over, and gave him the fish. Roy asked Anne if she could handle bringing the big cart over here by herself. Roy wanted to stay with Oliver and the bear to make sure Oliver didn't destroy the bearskin before they could gut and skin it. Anne walked quickly to the cabin and came back about 15 minutes later with the cart, the come-along and the harness to pull it. While she was gone, Oliver finished eating the fish, and Roy bent over to pet Oliver and thank him for saving their lives. Oliver didn't know what Roy was talking about, but liked Roy's tone of voice and the petting, so he sat there while Roy petted him. Anne got the cart set up at the head of the dead bear, and Roy helped her get the strap of the come-along around the bear's chest, then they hauled the bear onto the cart, and quickly got it balanced. Anne told Roy she'd have to wear the harness and lift the cart, but if Roy could push and help her she'd appreciate it. Roy wasn't too happy, but then realized Anne was right, there was no way he could pick up the handles of the cart wearing a cast and a sling that kept his injured arm in front of his body. Roy helped Anne into the harness, and she picked up the cart - it wasn't as heavy as she thought it was. Roy had laid all the fishing tackle and stuff on the cart, freeing up his good hand to push the cart from behind.

As they were heading back to the cabin, Roy whistled at Oliver, who woofed, and soon Francine and the pups trotted up to Oliver, and they all walked back to the cabin. When they got close, Roy told Anne they should butcher the bear right on the cart, and he'd start fetching water. Anne took her skinner and got to work, and by the time Roy got back with a bucket of water, Anne had the bear opened from ribs to butt, and was removing the guts. Roy asked her to save the bear fat, the hide, and the larger cuts of meat, and give the rest to Oliver and his family. Anne agreed, since Oliver had basically risked his life to save theirs. As Anne finished gutting the bear, she gave Oliver and Francine a large pile of all the bear's innards. They devoured the pile, even the cubs got into the act, and it was quickly gone. Anne and Roy both started skinning the bear, and as they exposed the larger cuts of meat, they removed them from the bear, and Roy walked them into the cabin. Anne quickly de-boned the rest of the carcass, and the wolves pigged out. Anne finally got the skin free, and Roy took his <skip> and cracked the skull open to brain tan the hide.

"Roy, what are you doing?"

"Anne, it's a primitive tanning technique called 'brain tanning'. It seems that when God designed the animals, he made the brains just the right size that when mixed with water, it's just enough material to tan the hide. I've done it with all the other hides, and it works pretty well. You smash the brain into the hide, mix it with water, and spread it onto the inside of the hide, then let it dry."

"Neat, I was wondering how you tanned all those hides - can I try?"

"OK, Anne, but it's kind of gross and smelly."

"I can handle gross and smelly - I'm a nurse remember." Anne took over from Roy, and he was

right, it was pretty disgusting and smelly, but she would never admit it to Roy. When she was done, Roy took the hide and spread it over the smokehouse, It took much longer with just one usable arm, but he got it done. Meanwhile Anne had wheeled the carcass to where the other skeletons were, and dumped the body off the cart, then took the buckets and washed off the cart. As she backed up, Oliver and his family started picking through the carcass. Roy went inside, got another bucket of water, and Oliver's water bowl, and set it next to the wolves. Oliver drank from his bowl, while Francine and the cubs drank straight from the bucket. Roy had to go back for several refills while Anne cut the meat into strips to jerk it, and stuffed the bear fat into an empty coffee can with a plastic lid. When he was finished giving the wolves water, Roy took the meat out to the smokehouse, and hung it up. He removed the dried fish that was done to make room for the bear meat. When he had all the bear meat up in the smokehouse, he started a fire, and closed the door. Anne had saved a couple of steaks for dinner.

When they were finished, Roy washed his hands, then sat on the bed. Anne cleaned up, then walked over to Roy and hugged the stuffing out of him and gave him a big kiss.

"What was that for? Not that I'm complaining."

"Roy - you're such a man sometimes. One of the reasons I love you so much is I know I'm safe when you're around."

"Me Tarzan - you Jane?"

"Not exactly, but even us liberated women still like to feel protected - as long as you're not overprotective."

"I don't understand, All I did was shoot a charging bear."

"Yeah, a charging bear that was going to have us for lunch. While I was frozen in place, you reacted, and as coolly as Clint Eastwood shot that big bad bear right through the ear. I'm a good shot, but I'm not that good at reactive shooting. I just froze instead of drawing and getting a shot off until it was all over."

"Don't worry about it Anne. That's why I was so glad that you gave me Ron's holster - it's not that you can't defend yourself, I feel better if I can defend you, and I'm not just sitting there watching a bear eat you for lunch. I don't know how to train you to react the way I do, I just think that when you've been totally responsible for your survival, certain instincts kick in that short-circuit your thought process and you react automatically. I didn't even think, as soon as Oliver charged the bear, something clicked inside me, and I just reacted. Luckily I was fast enough to keep Oliver from getting hurt. I'm sure he would have died protecting us, I'm just glad he didn't have to. This isn't the first time he's saved my life. He's alerted me to bears several times before, this is the first time he's attacked one though."

“I’m just glad everyone’s OK. I guess I’ve become a City Girl, and I need to change how I think real quickly.”

“Don’t be hard on yourself Anne, It took me a while when I first got here until I could react without thinking to a dangerous situation. While you were raised here, and have all the skills necessary, it’s just a matter of remembering the mind set.”

Anne slid next to Roy, and soon they were holding each other and passionately kissing. When they finally came up for air, Roy said that he was too tired to handle any more excitement, and asked for a rain check. Anne gave him an evil grin and said, “How about after dinner.” With that, Anne got up and started making dinner. She fried the bear steaks in the cast iron skillet, made mashed potatoes and gravy, and heated a can of corn. Roy cleaned off the table, set it, and lit a lantern. When dinner was ready, Anne put the steaks on the plates, and carried it to the table. When they were seated, Roy bowed his head and said grace. “Dear Lord, thank you for this food, please bless it, and thanks for sending Oliver to protect us. Please take care of Oliver and his family, and please continue to protect us and bless us. Amen” Anne’s Amen echoed Roy’s and soon they were eating a very tasty bear steak. When they finished, Anne cleared the table as Roy got out their bibles. They sat and read their Bibles for a couple of hours, and Roy showed Anne how to look stuff up when she had questions, and soon she was thumbing through Strong’s and the Concordances like she had been doing it all her life. Roy realized that Anne was really intelligent, and beautiful as well. When they finished, they got undressed, and slid into bed giggling like kids.

Chapter 28 - How the Garden Grows

The next morning, they rolled out of bed, Anne grabbed her robe and started breakfast. Roy followed her a minute later, wearing his greens. He helped Anne fix breakfast, and was cuddling her while he was at it.

“Roy, I thought you got enough of that last night.”

“I just like to hold you, and I like your smell.” Roy reached around from behind her, and wrapped his arms around her, nuzzling her neck.

“You keep that up and I’m going to burn breakfast.” Roy let her go, and grabbed the coffee pot, filled it full of water, added some coffee to the basket, and set it on the stove.

“I need to go check the smokehouse, I’ll be back in a minute.”

“Breakfast should be done when you get back Roy.”

Roy walked outside, opened the smokehouse door to let the smoke out, saw the fire was out, rearranged the meat, and lit a new fire, then closed the door. Roy walked back in the house, and sure enough, Anne was just putting breakfast on. Roy was having a hard time concentrating, because Anne’s robe was wide open. After she put down the plates, she looked at Roy, saw where he was looking, and quickly closed her robe “You ARE a dirty Old Man.”

“Can’t help admiring the view. You are very beautiful. I love looking at you.”

“Sit down and eat your breakfast. You definitely don’t need Viagra, maybe I should start putting Salt Peter in your food.”

“Your Loss.”

They ate breakfast, then Anne got quickly dressed before Roy had any other ideas. When they had finished cleaning up, Roy said they might need to check the garden, since he hadn’t done anything but watering it since he had planted it. Anne walked back into the second room, and carried out two gardening stools, and a bunch of gardening tools. Anne set them on the table, and Roy helped her get on her shoulder holster and fanny pack, then Roy belted on his fanny pack with the holster for his .44 Magnum, and helped her carry the stuff out to the garden. Anne suggested they weed and thin the garden before they water it, since this will be so much easier to do if the ground isn’t muddy. First thing they did was carefully take down the chicken wire fence, and roll the chicken wire up to put back up later. Roy started at one end of the garden, and Anne at the other, and they had the weeds pulled in a couple of hours, and then they thinned the seedlings for the ideal plant spacing. When they had finished, they put the chicken

wire fence back up. Roy looked at the pile of weeds, and asked Anne if any of them were worth keeping. Anne recognized several tasty greens, as well as some that she definitely didn't want to eat. She quickly sorted the weeds into two piles, and Roy pulled a Ziploc bag out of his fanny pack and started stuffing the good greens into the bag. When they had the fence up and secured, Roy turned on the garden water, and flooded the garden several times. He figured that the garden would be ready to harvest at least part of the vegetables in a month or two, then he could try a late season planting for some of the fast growing vegetables. Roy asked Anne if she felt like fishing. She said "Just make sure you keep your .44 Magnum handy, and watch for bears instead of ogling me."

Roy uttered the famous words, "Yes Dear", and they walked into the cabin to put up the garden stuff, and pick up the fishing gear.

Anne asked Roy, "By the way, do you have a fishing license?"

"I had one over a year ago when I got stranded, who are you - the Game Warden?"

"OK, when we get back to the cabin, I'll call the Mayor and he'll file a Homesteader's permit for us that allows us to take whatever game we can consume each year. We can't sell meat, but we can sell excess skins as long as we are eating the meat. Your smokehouse should be proof enough to the Game Warden if he ever shows up."

"Does he ever show up?"

"Ron and I have only seen one once in over 20 years, and that was because he was an Outfitter. The State isn't too worried about Homesteaders over-fishing or hunting, since they have to live here each year." Anne picked up the fishing rod and tackle box, then headed out the door. Roy opened the door for her, then they walked hand in hand down to the lake. When they got to their fishing spot, Anne looked around nervously, but didn't see any bears. Roy decided to make sure, and let out a Rebel Yell that nearly made Anne jump out of her shoes. "I haven't heard one of those since I left Texas - where did you learn it?"

"I used to fish and hunt with a bunch of Good Ol' Boys who were proud to call themselves Rednecks. They taught me one night around the campfire while we were sipping a jug of shine. They explained the Shine helped us Yankees get in the proper mood. Anyway, it worked. There aren't any bears around here for miles now."

"You probably scared every herd of caribou around here all the way to Canada."

Anne got the fishing pole ready, baited the hook, opened the bail, and cast the line way out into the lake, and soon had landed a large lake trout. Anne put it on the stringer, re-baited the hook, and cast to the same spot. Soon she had several fish on the stringer. Roy commented that Oliver and Fran didn't show up, and Anne said that they were probably recovering from pigging

out yesterday, and lying in their den unable to move. When she had a stringer full, Anne turned to go, and saw Roy was indeed watching out for Bears instead of ogling her figure. “Roy, I was Just Kidding. I’m glad you take your protection duties so seriously, but you can look too.”

“Anne, don’t worry, I sneaked a couple of peeks while your back was turned.”

Anne laughed and picked up the stringer, the fishing rod and tackle box, as Roy imitated a SWAT team clearing a building, running from tree to tree, yelling “CLEAR”.

Anne was laughing so hard she almost dropped the fish.

When they got home, Roy took off his fanny pack, helped Anne unload the fish and the tackle, then helped her out of the shoulder holster and fanny pack. Roy decided against any more “Dirty Old Man” stuff since Anne was sitting there with her skinner out skinning the fish. Anne filleted one of the fish, then cut up the rest for jerky. While Roy said he didn’t like dried fish, he’d never had her fish chowder. Roy hung the fish up to dry, as Anne cleaned up the cabin and repacked everything. Anne called the Mayor, and he filed the appropriate paperwork for their Homesteader’s Permit, and told Anne that Jim was going to make a run in a couple of days, and he had some stuff for them. Anne was surprised, since she didn’t remember ordering anything, then figured Roy had ordered something earlier that just took later getting there. When she finished, she recharged the battery with the military surplus hand crank generator, then put everything up. Roy got out their Bibles, and while it was still light, they read their Bibles together. Soon it was getting dark, and Anne decided it was time for dinner. She breaded the fillets, got the stove running, put the cast iron skillet on the stove to get hot, added a saucepan next to it, put some water in it, and made instant mashed potatoes. Once the skillet was hot, she added the lard to the pan, and had the fish frying in minutes. Meanwhile, Roy had cleaned off the table, set it, and lit the lantern. He handed Anne the plates, and then they were sitting down for Dinner. Roy said Grace, then they started eating. Roy started choking halfway through, and Anne quickly got up as Roy appeared to have an obstructed windpipe, and couldn’t breathe. Anne wrapped her arms around Roy’s waist, and performed the Heimlich maneuver. Roy coughed up a piece of fish, and immediately felt better. After he caught his breath, Anne told him to drink water to wash any debris down, and to make sure he chewed his food from now on.

“Anne, what did you do?”

“It’s called the Heimlich maneuver, and it’s something everyone should know. Many people die each year from obstructed airways. Often if it’s a piece of food blocking the windpipe, the Heimlich maneuver clears the obstruction by forcing the air in the lungs out the throat, expelling the obstruction like a cork from a kid’s popgun. I should probably teach you CPR and some advanced First Aid stuff while I’m at it. That reminds me - I need to get a Trauma Kit here - all we have is whatever is in your emergency kits. As accident prone as you are, I really should have a Trauma Kit here. I’ll get hold of Steve tomorrow if he hasn’t left, and have him order one from a Medical Supply company he uses. They give him wholesale pricing. While

I'm at it, I'll order some general medical supplies as well."

"Anne, thanks - you just saved my life. If you think we need it, by all means get it. I have a current Red Cross Basic First Aid and CPR card, but I always wanted some advanced training."

"I can't certify you, because I'm not a certified instructor, but I can train you all the way to ALS/Paramedic if you're interested."

"In that case, shouldn't we have more than just 1 kit, just in case?"

"You're right. We can leave the Trauma kit here in the cabin, but we can carry a smaller Trauma/Medic kit in the field when we go hunting. That way if you shoot yourself, I can keep you alive until Jim comes to pick you up, or if another tree falls on you. It means you'll have to carry a backpack instead of that little fanny pack, but you can also carry a lot more stuff. I'll also get a daybag for myself with a Camelback hydration pack, and some other stuff."

"Anne, I already have a bag set up exactly as you will probably need it, you might want to change some of the contents, but it's a large daybag with a Camelback 90oz HAWG container, and a larger version of my fanny pack kit. Matter of fact, Ron gave me a list of stuff to put in it."

"Great, if that's the case, all I'll have to do is change the clothes, and add some extra Medical gear that Ron wouldn't think of, like a disposable surgical stapler."

"Nope, don't have one of those in there. Anne, when did you say Steve was leaving?"

"He was supposed to leave less than a week after the wedding."

"Maybe you ought to call him right now just in case."

"Good answer, I wanted to talk to him anyway." Anne walked over to the radio, tuned Steve's frequency from memory, turned the power switch on and keyed the mike, "Yo Bro, you there?"

Steve's voice was heard from the speakers, and he was laughing his head off. "Anne, I know that's you - no one else dares talk to me like that. Glad you caught me, I'm just closing the Clinic for good. I'm shipping out day after tomorrow."

"Steve, can you order some Medical Kits and supplies for me? You still have that contact in that Medical Supply company that gives you stuff for Wholesale?"

"Yeah, I can still get stuff from him, what do you want?"

"First of all, I want a Major Trauma Kit, a Trauma/Medic kit, and a whole bunch of stuff that

you're going to have to use your DEA number to order, along with a page full of Medical Supplies." Anne told Steve a list of the supplies she needed.

"What are you doing, setting up your own clinic?"

"No Silly, Roy's a little accident prone, and I wanted to have a Major Trauma Kit with all the Meds just in case he shot himself or another tree fell on him. I mean, he just was choking on a piece of fish, and I had to do the Heimlich Maneuver on him to get him breathing OK again."

"He's OK, his color's normal - are there any signs of tracheal damage?"

"He's fine, Bro, just relax. Anyway, if you could get this stuff for me, and ship it to us through the Mayor, I'd appreciate it."

"Ok, Sis, I'll do it - just watch it with the narcotics and stuff. I can get in a lot of trouble with that."

"Steve, Who was your nurse for all that time, and I did work in Dallas for all those years as an ER Charge Nurse - I think I know what I'm doing."

"Ok, I'll place the order right now, and bill your account. By the Way, this was supposed to be a surprise, but I'm flying up with Jim to say goodbye to you both, and check Roy's arm."

"Great, Bro - See ya then. Bye." Anne cleared the mike, waited a few seconds for a reply, then shut off the radio, and broke out the hand crank generator to recharge it.

"Anne, what was all that stuff you were talking about? I followed for about the first dozen items, then I didn't recognize anything."

"I just ordered a whole bunch of First Aid and Medical supplies, including common drugs and antibiotics just in case. I also ordered a full set of IV solutions, as well as blood expanders and other specialized Medic gear that a Combat Medic would need."

"You expecting a WAR?"

"No, silly, It's just easier to carry this specialized stuff."

"OK, Anne - you're the expert. You'll have to show me how to use all this stuff."

"Ever started an IV, or gave an injection?"

"Of course NOT."

“Oh Boy, are WE going to have fun - I hope you’re not afraid of the sight of blood.”

“I doubt it Anne, Remember, I skinned all those Bears and Caribou.”

“OK, but your blood, or mine is different than a dead animal. Advanced Life Support techniques can get messy.”

“I’ll handle it. I want to be able to save your life too.”

“Roy you are so sweet. It’s getting late, let’s get to bed.”

“Thought you’d Never Ask.”

With that, they got undressed, and under the covers in a minute, giggling like kids.

Chapter 29 - Free at last.

The remainder of the time Roy had to be in the cast passed quickly, but not quickly enough for Roy. Anne helped him do his daily PT exercises. Roy did not enjoy it, but he needed to do it if he was going to be able to use his arm when the cast came off. Finally the day arrived, and after breakfast, Anne came out of the back room with what looked like a mechanic's tool bag, sat Roy down at the table, and told him she was going to take his cast off. Roy was overjoyed, and quickly sat down. He almost got back up when he got a look at the tool she was pulling out of the bag. Anne told him to sit down and relax - This wouldn't hurt a bit. Roy was thinking "Yeah right, in that case, I'll take the cast off you." but took it like a man. Anne put some goggles on, took out a cordless drill and a toothless saw to cut the cast off, told Roy to sit still, and started to cut the cast off starting below his shoulder and ending at his hand. Then she took a device that looked like a pair of pliers, and wedged the crack open, and slowly opened the crack with the tool until the whole cast had a crack running down it about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ inch wide. Then she reached in and grabbed the plaster cast, and with more strength than Roy knew she had, she cracked the cast in two, and it fell off his arm. Roy's arm had atrophied from being in the cast for 6 weeks, and he was shocked when he saw it. Anne didn't look concerned, so Roy relaxed.

Anne finally told Roy, "We're going to have to do a lot of hard work to get your arm back in shape. We need to resume your PT exercises, and start lifting weights - we've got plenty of cans of different sizes. I want you to start with an 8oz soup can, and eventually you'll be curling #10 cans. Right now, I want to test your range of motion. Hold on a second while I get a notebook, I need to write this down."

Anne returned in a minute with a notepad, and a device that looked like a protractor. Anne explained they needed to measure range of motion, and the elbow angle was an easy measure. Roy set his arm on the table flat, and Anne asked him to leave his elbow on the table and lift his hand to his face slowly, and stop when it hurt. Roy got about halfway and stopped. "Not bad - Especially for someone your age." As she wrote in the notebook, she had him repeat it several times - she wanted to verify her number she told him, but she really wanted to make him use it under controlled conditions. After about 6 reps, she asked him to stop. Next she measured flexation and rotation of the wrist. Roy did OK, evidently his arm had healed nicely. Anne told Roy that it looked like his arm had healed fine, and to stop using the sling unless he really had to. Roy stood up, and swept Anne off her feet, and gave her a big hug and a kiss. Roy asked her if she wanted to go fishing.

They grabbed their stuff, and Anne helped Roy with his shoulder holster and fanny pack. Roy felt much better wearing the shoulder holster than Ron's old belt holster. The Colt Anaconda got heavy hanging on his waist. Roy figured it would be a couple of weeks before he could shoot the 22/45, but it helped balance the shoulder holster, so he left it there. When Anne was all loaded up, Roy opened the door, then they walked hand in hand to the garden. Stuff was

definitely growing now, and Roy made sure he watered it twice a day now that the days were getting longer. Roy filled the trenches twice, then shut the water off. They set off to the lake, and soon reached the shoreline, and turned right to walk to their fishing spot. Anne baited the hook, then handed the rod to Roy, "Go ahead, you need the exercise." Roy took the rod in his right hand, opened the bail, and cast the lure out into the lake, then used his left hand to crank the reel back in until the lure was right where he wanted it. After a few minutes, the rod tip twitched then bent sharply. Roy made sure the fish was hooked, then started reeling slowly in. Since he maintained pressure on the fish, the slower retrieve didn't seem to hurt. Soon Roy had the fish close enough to land, and Anne grabbed the line to land the fish, then she put it on the stringer, checked the lure, and told Roy to go ahead and cast again. Roy made sure she was out of the way, then cast the lure out to the same spot. It seemed the fish must be holding on that area for some reason, because there were always fish in that spot. Roy caught several more fish, and was feeling much better because he was able to support Anne again. When they had enough fish, Anne carried the stringer, and Roy carried the rod and tacklebox (Anne figured it was light enough for Roy to carry home - it would be good exercise.). When they got home, Roy put up the rod and tacklebox while Anne started cleaning and filleting the fish. When she finished, she kept two fillets for dinner, and Roy hung the rest in the smokehouse to dry.

When they were finished, they washed their hands, and Anne suggested they water the garden again. They walked hand in hand out to the garden, and while Roy watered, Anne checked the garden, and removed a few weeds they had missed before. She told Roy that they'd be able to start harvesting carrots and some of the greens in a couple of weeks. Roy asked Anne to check on their canning supplies when they got back. They walked back to the cabin, and Roy decided to check out the perimeter of the cabin, check on the woodpiles, etc. Roy was pleased, there was more wood left than he had hoped. He checked the gas, and a can was empty that he swore was full the day of the accident. He thought that he should ask the Mayor when he called to order some more stuff about it, and went back inside. Anne checked on the canning supplies, and made a list of things they'd need. Roy broke out the radio, and set it on the Mayor's frequency. "Roy Williams calling the Mayor - You got your ears on good buddy?"

"10-4 there, right back at you Roy - What convoy are you driving with?" The Mayor was having a hard time not laughing at the old cliché.

"Bill, do you know anything about the missing can of gas, or the fact that my woodpile is 30% bigger than it should be?"

"OK, Roy - you got me. While you guys were getting hitched, Jim and a few guys from town wanted to do you a favor and felled a bunch of trees just in case it took you longer to heal than you thought."

"Bill, I don't know what to say ...Thanks A Lot."

"You want to make the guys really happy, buy a round the next time you're in town."

“You got it Bill, I got a list of stuff we need. Some food and stuff, but what we really need is some canning supplies. We need several cases of the large Mason jars with Lids and Rings. Also, can you include 5 pounds of Canning Salt just to be safe?”

Anne interrupted Roy, and asked him to go into the other room then talked to the mayor for a few minutes, then hung up.

“What was that all about?”

“It’s a surprise Roy. You’ll just have to wait.”

It was starting to get dark, so Anne made dinner and they read their Bibles before going to bed.

Two days later, Roy awoke to the sound of Jim’s airplane. Ooops - Overslept again. They got dressed quickly, and by the time they were dressed, Jim was at the door with several packages, including a bag for Anne. Roy helped Jim unload, and Anne disappeared. 5 minutes later, there was a high-pitched squeal from the second room. Roy rushed in, and Anne grabbed Roy and hugged the stuffing out of him.

“What’s up. I thought something had happened to you.”

“Roy you better sit down for this one.”

Anne led Roy to the bed, where they sat down. “Roy, how would you like to be a Daddy again?”

“What, How did that happen? Doh, that was a stupid question. I didn’t think I still had it in me.”

“Well you big stud, you got me pregnant. Now what are you going to do?”

“I’m going to celebrate of course. Hey Jim, come on in here. Did you know about this?”

“Not exactly - I peeked while I was flying. I guess this means that the box of cigars and the bottle of Whiskey the Mayor gave me is going to come in handy after all. Congratulations you two.” Jim gave Anne and Roy a big hug, then went outside to get the cigars and the whiskey. Anne decided that it wouldn’t be a good idea for her to have any, so Jim and Roy sat on the porch on a couple of stumps, sipped the whiskey and smoked the cigars.

“Jim, I’m happy and scared at the same time. You know it’s been almost 30 years since the last time I had kids around. I hope I remember what to do.”

“Roy, Anne’s got the hard part. All you have to do is help her raise the kid. I know you guys

will do well. I've known Anne since she was a kid. I was always Uncle Jim to her. I guess life has come full circle."

"Jim, I never knew. How would you like to be a semi-official Granddad, since you're the closest to one our child will ever know."

Jim choked up, and fought back tears. When he could finally speak, he told Roy. "It would be an honor. I promise to spoil your kid rotten, and then hand it back to you."

"Gee, Thanks Granddad." Roy punched Jim in the shoulder.

They spent the rest of the afternoon talking and drinking. When the bottle was empty, and it was getting dark, Anne walked out onto the porch to check up on them.

"Jim, I think you shouldn't fly tonight. I've already made up the cot. She helped them into the house, and when they got inside, she had dinner ready. They sat down, Roy said grace, and they ate fairly quietly. When dinner was finished, Anne helped Jim to the cot, laid him down, then came back to get Roy. He barely made it to bed. Anne helped him get undressed - she wasn't sleeping with a man wearing his boots. As soon as she got him tucked in, she joined Roy. "Goodnight my beloved Husband." Roy murmured "Goodnight" and fell asleep.

The next morning, Anne had a big breakfast ready for Jim and Roy. When breakfast was finished, she asked Jim what he was doing today. Jim admitted he had nothing scheduled today, so Anne asked him if he could fly her into Anchorage.

Both Roy and Jim looked at her sideways.

"Roy, I'm over 30, this is my first pregnancy. I should have an amniocentesis to make sure there are no birth defects.

Roy almost fell out of his chair, but didn't say anything. He knew if the child had serious birth defects, the doctor would recommend an abortion, which he was dead against. Roy decided he had to leave it in God's hands. "OK, Anne - I understand. It think it's a good idea to know. You do whatever you feel is right."

"Roy, I'm scared too. I want this baby as much as you do. Anyway, it's in God's hands." Roy held Anne's hands in his, and prayed for a couple of minutes, asking God's mercy and blessing on their baby. When he was finished, he heard 3 Amen's. Roy looked over at Jim.

"I'm the Grandpa here. I want Jr. to be OK too."

Anne looked at Roy and Jim, "What were you two talking about yesterday?"

Jim spoke up, "Remember when you used to call me "Uncle Jim", well when I told Roy, he

nominated me the “Semi-Official Grandpa” since I’m the closest thing your kid will have to a grandparent. I hope you don’t mind.”

“Don’t be silly Uncle Jim.” Anne laughed for a while remembering why she called Jim Uncle. Then she got sad when she remembered Ron was the one that suggested it when their parents died when she was a teenager.

“If you two are done blubbering, you might want to get airborne. It’s a long trip.” Anne was walking out the door when Roy stopped her, and had her put on her fanny pack “just in case”. Jim was not happy, but realized that Roy was worried about Anne flying without him, and this was his way of keeping her safe. Roy walked them out to the airplane, and helped Anne get in, then gave her a big hug. “Roy, I’ll see you before nightfall. I love you, see you soon.” Roy closed her door, and got clear so Jim could start the plane. Once Jim had performed his ground checklist, he started the engine, and warmed it up. When he was happy with the way the engine was running, he turned and taxied to the lake, then turned, revved the motor to takeoff speed, and sped down the lake. They were airborne with 100 yards to spare, then quickly flew out of sight. When they were gone, Roy got on his knees and prayed that Anne would have a safe trip, and the baby would be OK.

Chapter 30 - Homecoming

Just before dusk of the longest day of Roy's life, and the most prayerful, Roy heard the drone of an aircraft engine. Minutes later, the pitch changed, it was coming toward the house. Roy got up from reading his Bible, opened the door, and waited until Jim taxied up to the door and shut the engine off. As soon as the prop stopped spinning, Roy was around to open Anne's door and give her a Big Hug.

"Anne, you don't know how much I've missed you today. I don't care what happens, I'm just so glad to have you back in my arms."

"Roy, I've got some great news, I saw an OBGYN that Steve had recommended in Anchorage. She was the best baby doc I had ever spoke to, and believe me; I met some real good ones in Texas. She said I didn't need an Amnio since I wasn't even 35, and this was my first pregnancy, I was in excellent health, didn't drink or smoke, and you had a history of normal children. She did do a thorough ultrasound, and everything is OK. Do you want to know if it's a Boy or Girl?"

"You mean they can tell this early?"

"It's a little easier to identify Boys than Girls, but the new ultrasounds are pretty accurate."

"Well if YOU already know, I want to."

"Ok, Roy - I'm carrying your son. He's got all 10 fingers and toes, and guess what? She dated my pregnancy via the ultrasound and some other tests and as near as she can figure, you got me pregnant on our wedding night, you big Stud."

"That was a night to remember, now even more so." Roy gave Anne a huge hug and a long kiss. Then he noticed something else.

"Are they getting bigger, or am I imagining things?"

"Nope, Madge said I could add 1 or 2 cup sizes during pregnancy, and probably keep one of them if I nurse afterward. You horny old Tomcat. Figures that would be the first thing you'd notice. You better be gentle, they're going to be sore for another 9 months."

"I can handle it if you can."

"Roy, that was One of the Worst puns I had heard in a long time. Let's go inside, I'm freezing and Jim needs to get home." Roy turned around to shake Jim's hand.

“Thanks, Grandpa.”

“Don’t mention it Roy, I needed to go to the FAA office in Anchorage to renew my license anyway, it was due for renewal by the end of the month, so I killed 2 birds with one stone. Anne did some shopping while she waited for me, I’ll help you unload it.”

As they brought several large boxes into the cabin, Roy was curious what she was buying. After Jim left, Roy helped her unpack the boxes, and found out it was mostly pregnancy stuff, including vitamins, books, and some medical gear. When Roy saw the medical gear he asked Anne what it was for.

“Guess what Roy, you get to deliver our baby.”

“WHAT? I’m not qualified.”

“Well, you’re it. It’s too dangerous for the baby to airlift me to Allakaket to deliver at the clinic, and old Doc Miller is a GP, not an OBGYN and hasn’t delivered a baby in 10 years. Besides, Madge said this one should be a breeze. I’ve got all the medical books you will need, as well as a complete delivery kit Madge made up for me. Steve told me the best book to read for Field deliveries is the Special Forces Medical Handbook, since their medics are trained and expected to deliver babies in conditions far more primitive and remote than this cabin. You’ve got 9 months, now get reading.”

“Yes Dear, I hope I don’t faint. The closest I got to Susan when my sons were born was the waiting room.”

“You’ll do OK, besides, you don’t have any choice.

With that, Roy blew out the lantern, and they went to bed.

Chapter 31 - Medical School

The next morning, Roy got out of bed, and put on his buckskins for the first time in weeks. He forgot how comfortable they were, and the boots completed the Jim Bridger look. Anne rolled out of bed, got dressed quickly (it was cold in the cabin.) and proceeded to make breakfast, Roy went to use the outhouse, then came inside to wash up before breakfast. When he was all washed up, Anne was starting breakfast, so Roy took advantage of the situation, sneaked up behind her, and wrapped his arms around her pregnant belly. She wasn't far enough along to be showing, but Roy wanted Anne to know he loved her, and was ecstatic that she was carrying his son.

Anne turned to him and jokingly said, "Down boy. You got plenty of loving last night."

"I know Anne, I just can't believe I'm going to be a father again."

"I know Roy, I'm overjoyed I'm finally going to be a mother."

Roy gave her a big hug, careful not to hurt her. When breakfast was ready, Roy got the plates out, and Anne dished up breakfast. She turned around and noticed he was wearing his buckskins. Anne let out a wolf whistle, saying "You know how good you look in buckskins? Jim Bridger eat your heart out."

Roy sat down and ate breakfast. Anne told Roy that she had a collection of medical books he was going to have to read and be ready in the next 9 months. She had her Merck Manual, Gray's Anatomy, The US Army Special Forces Manual, and a couple of other books. When she piled them on the table, it was over a foot high. She told Roy that he had 9 months to get ready, not only to deliver their baby, but to help care for it, and also to provide emergency first aid to Anne and Jr. She was going to give Roy the training equivalent of an EMT II or a Paramedic. Then she really dropped a bombshell on him.

"Roy, you're going to get to know me much better than you thought. Since we don't have the luxury of models, cadavers, etc. to learn on, I'll be your model. You'll be able to practice most of the stuff except I won't let you stick me to practice an IV, because if I get an infection from it, it could harm the baby. First things first, I need to teach you Adult CPR."

"Can I finish breakfast first?"

"Sure you big chicken."

As soon as breakfast was finished, Anne started explaining CPR and the Heimlich maneuver to him. She showed him by grasping him from behind the proper position, but didn't squeeze since he had just ate. After that, she laid on the bed, unbuttoned her top, and told Roy to sit next to

the bed. She told Roy that CPR was a combination of manual chest compression and rescue breathing, designed to support life until they could reach definitive help. The One-Man CPR technique for Adults was 15 1.5" chest compressions followed by 2 full breaths, at a rate of 80 compressions per minute, or count out loud between compressions to keep pace. Anne unclasped her bra and showed Roy where her sternum was, and how to locate the proper point to place his hands for chest compression, then asked Roy to place his hands like she showed him. Roy was feeling very uneasy, but realized he needed to know this if he wanted to save Anne's life, so he put his right hand between her breasts, felt for the tip of the sternum, and moved the heel of his hand up 2 finger spaces from that point, then covered his right hand with his left, and locked his elbows as Anne told him. Finally she asked Roy to take his hands off her before he got any ideas. She re-buttoned her blouse, but stayed on the bed. Next she tipped her head into the proper position for rescue breathing, then talked Roy through doing it to her. Finally she said, "Now here's the best part, you get to practice rescue breathing. Act like you're going to give me a huge open-mouthed kiss with my mouth wide open. Since I'm conscious, don't actually breathe out forcefully, but you can get a feel for it, so to speak."

Roy grabbed Anne, and gave her a wet sloppy kiss.

"That's not how you do it silly."

"I hate to tell you Anne, but Susan and I were just certified as First Responders by the American Red Cross less than 2 years ago. However I did enjoy trying CPR on you."

Anne stood up and tossed one of her lighter books at Roy, luckily she missed, since even the lightest one would have hurt.

"Why didn't you tell me."

"You were having so much fun, I didn't want to spoil your fun."

"OK, just for that, I want you to open my Merck Manual and start reading at chapter 1, At the end of the chapter is a self-quiz, so you better make sure you retain what you read. A passing score is 80% in this school, by the way. If you do good, we can go fishing this afternoon. While you're reading, I want you to hold this 8 oz. can of tomatoes in your left hand and flex your wrist."

"Yes Dear, could you do me 1 favor though?"

"Depends."

"Can you make me a pot of coffee, I think I'm going to need it." Roy broke out several #2 pencils and a large legal pad, he was sure he was going to need notes for this. He was reading the introduction to medical terminology, while some of the words were familiar, the

abbreviations were like reading Greek, actually he thought it was, since Modern Medicine originated in Greece. He'd have to ask Anne about that later.

The time passed quickly, and just after noon. Roy finished studying Chapter 1, and told Anne he was ready for the test. Anne gave him a blank piece of paper, and took his notes and stuff away.

"Hey wait a minute, I was counting on having that."

"I never said it was open book. What are you going to do, lug the book out to the field so you can patch me up. You have to know this stuff cold."

That brought Roy's train of thought to a dead stop. If he didn't know this stuff cold, Anne could die. Still, Roy felt confident enough to go ahead and take the test. Anne scored the test, and told Roy he got a score of 85%. He only missed two. She figured he got "q.i.d." and "q.d." confused. Even some doctors she knew goofed on that one. One doctor wrote QID on a prescription when he meant QD, and almost killed a patient. Nurses looked out for that all the time, but unfortunately the patient had an inexperienced nurse. Anne gave Roy a big kiss, then went to pick up the fishing tackle. Roy got up, put on his shoulder holster and fanny pack, and helped Anne into hers. Then she picked up the tackle, and Roy opened the door. They walked hand in hand out to the garden. Roy quickly watered the garden, and noticed nothing amiss, and shut off the water. They walked down to the lake, and Anne handed Roy the fishing rod. Anne looked around nervously for any sign of a bear, but didn't see any, so she turned around and relaxed. Roy cast the lure deep into the lake, and within minutes had his first strike. He landed it a couple of minutes later. Roy's hand and wrist were feeling better, and he realized it was because Anne was making him use it, and the stiffness and soreness were working themselves out. As he tossed the lure out into the lake, Roy remembered they hadn't gone hunting yet this season, and if they wanted some meat, they needed to get out and hunt. Roy suddenly realized Anne was pregnant, and probably wouldn't be able to go with him in 6 months, so if they wanted to go together, they needed to do it quick. Roy hooked a second Lake trout, and easily reeled in the line, and landed the fish. As he was unhooking the fish, he mentioned what he had realized to Anne. and she said "Took you long enough to figure that out."

Roy was confused, then thought they could talk about it later. Meanwhile he had a fish to catch. As he wiggled the rod tip, another Lake trout took the bait. Roy set the hook, then started reeling it in. As he landed the fish, Anne let out a yelp. Roy turned around, and Oliver limped into view, his left front paw appeared to be injured. Roy quickly put the fish on the stringer, and called Oliver over. Oliver stopped next to Roy, and Roy carefully reached down to take Oliver's injured paw. For some reason, Oliver didn't resist, and promptly sat down. It looked like Oliver had torn a pad in a fight with something. Anne opened her first aid kit, got out the Hydrogen Peroxide preps, the 4x4's, a single-use foil pack of antibiotic ointment, and a roller bandage. She handed the HP to Roy, who carefully swabbed the injured area of Oliver's paw,

and got all the dirt out of the wound. Anne then applied the antibiotic ointment to a 4x4 pad, and Roy wrapped it around the injured paw, and wrapped it with the roller bandage, and finished it off with a wrap of Duct tape to tape it to itself. He bandaged it snugly, but not too tight, then took his canteen and cup out to give Oliver some water. When he was finished, Roy thought about Francine and the pups, told Anne to stay there with Oliver and he'd be right back. Roy ran as fast as he could for the den, and when he got there, Francine was sitting there with the pups like nothing had happened. Roy did a quick head count, and all the pups were there, so he walked back to Anne and Oliver.

"Everything is OK at the den, Oliver must have tangled with something while he was out hunting."

Anne's big sigh of relief told Roy that she was worried too. Since Oliver was still sitting there, Roy decided to feed him one of their fish, since he looked like he could use a good meal for once. Roy took the last fish they caught off the stringer, and dropped it in front of Oliver, who laid down and started eating the whole fish. Roy thought he should catch a few more just in case, so he picked up the fishing rod, and tossed the lure out into the lake, and quickly caught another fish. Good thing, since Oliver had just finished eating the first one, and was definitely looking forward to seconds. Roy tossed the second fish to Oliver who swatted it with his good paw and started eating it before it had even stopped struggling. Anne was fascinated and Grossed Out at the same time. Roy cast the lure out into the lake again, and caught another fish, but Oliver had slowed down a little, so he put this one on the stringer when he finished. There was still room on the stringer, so Roy cast the lure out into the lake again. After a few minutes, he caught another fish, and landed that. Oliver was still eating the last one, so Roy put this one on the stringer too.

When Oliver finished eating, he limped over to Roy's side, and Roy petted him just like Old Home days. Roy started crying because he had really missed Oliver, but didn't realize it because he was so busy with Anne. Oliver just sat there for a while as they got reacquainted. When Roy had regained his composure, Oliver walked to the lake, and noisily drank his fill, then walked back to Roy and licked his hand as if to say "Thanks for the first aid and the grub, but I got to get home, the Missus will wonder where I was." Oliver limped slowly into the forest toward his den. Roy hoped his bandage job would hold. Roy knew that when the wound healed, Oliver could chew the bandage off, and would be as good as new.

Roy picked up the stringer, and Anne picked up the fishing pole and tackle box, and they walked back to the cabin. On the way home, Roy quickly filled the garden full of water. When they reached the cabin, Anne set the tackle box down, grabbed the stringer from Roy, and opened the door, sat at the table, and started cleaning and gutting the fish. Roy put up the fishing rod and tackle, washed his hands, then went out to check on the smokehouse. He made room for the fish that Anne would have for him in a minute, and took in the dried meat to store in the meat box in the second room. Roy had an armload of dried jerky, and put it into the box on the shelf, then took the fillets from Anne and hung them up. When he was finished, he

started a fire in the smokehouse, and closed the door. When he got back inside, he told Anne they needed to go hunting as soon as she felt Roy could handle pulling the cart. Anne thought to herself, “that might take a week or two”, then told Roy that it depends on how hard he worked at rehab. Roy promised to be a good patient. Roy asked Anne if it were OK for her to shoot, or if he should. Anne thought about that for a minute, realized she wasn’t more than a month pregnant, the Browning .308 with the Boss unit and the muzzle brake was fairly easy on the recoil, and that lead or anything else wasn’t a problem since it was outdoors. Then she remembered Roy’s recently healed arm, and what the recoil might do to it.

“I think I better shoot if we go in the next two weeks, I don’t want to risk your arm right now. I’m not far enough along for the concussion or recoil to hurt the baby.”

“OK, Anne, if you say so. You do realize that in a couple of months if we need me to hunt, I’ll have to go by myself. And after you have the baby, I’ll have to go by myself until Jr’s big enough to handle being outside overnight.”

“I know that Roy, but it’s worth it to be carrying your baby.”

Anne knew exactly what to say to make Roy all gushy and he walked over and gave her a big hug and kiss. “I love you so much.” Roy then thought how fortunate he was, He had loved Susan for the first half of his life, had a family with her, then he briefly had a wolf as a friend, now he had a wife and a second family. Roy realized he was more blessed than he realized, and said a quick prayer of thanks. Roy made plans to go hunting in the next couple of weeks, and asked Anne what he needed to do to get ready. She said she wanted all the stiffness and soreness out of the arm, and 80% of the range of motion of the right arm. She told Roy that was a tall order for 2 weeks, but she figured he was in excellent health for his age. Roy went back to his studies, and Anne made a list of the chapters he needed to know and what order to read them in. She also mixed in the other books on a topic basis, so he got a well-rounded idea about the particular chapter, both from a conventional hospital situation, and a field improvisation situation. Anne realized the reason Roy was studying so hard, was he realized that if anything happened to Anne or Jr. that he would have to do what he could to save their lives without much help. Even if the plane left as soon as they called, it would take at least ½ hour, and there was no guarantee it could even make it if the weather was bad. That meant an hour round-trip, and that ate up most of the golden hour that she’d relied on as a RN in Dallas. Basically, they were on their own barring a major miracle. Anne settled down when she remembered that she grew up in this environment, and she turned out OK. In some ways it was safer: No crime, auto accidents, or drugs. And definitely no MTV.

After a couple of hours, Anne went into the kitchen to make dinner, and when it was almost ready, she asked Roy to clear off the table so they could eat. Roy piled his books off to one side, set the table, and since he already had the lantern lit from studying, he let it burn. He carried the plates in to Anne, who loaded them up with food. When she sat down, Roy said Grace. He had a lot to be thankful for, so it took a while. Finally he said Amen and they dug

in. After dinner, Roy fed the fireplace because it was getting cool outside. Then he commented to Anne they really needed some more firewood. Anne told Roy that would have to wait a month or so, and he could only log the smaller trees, she didn't want him to go splat. Roy kissed her on the forehead, and promised to be careful. Then he went back to his studies. He kept his nose in the book until bed time, when Anne put her hand on his shoulder, announced it was bedtime, and he should put up the books. Roy turned and gave her a big kiss, and then they got undressed and got into bed.

Chapter 32 - Roy Continues his Studies

Roy got dressed as soon as he got up the next morning, and started the fireplace, since it was cold in the cabin. Anne got dressed, started the woodstove, and started breakfast. Roy lit the lantern, broke out his medical books, and got to work. When Anne had breakfast ready, he cleared away his books, and ate breakfast. When they had finished and cleared the plates, Roy resumed his studies. He kept at it until after noon, when he told Anne he was ready to take the next test. As before, she took away all his notes, and Roy started the test. Half an hour later, he finished, and Anne scored the exam. The look on her face told him everything.

“Roy, you got 100% this time. You must have really been studying hard.”

“Anne, I realized yesterday what you said, I need to know this stuff cold. I want to make sure I know this stuff in case I need it. The last thing I want to happen is for something to happen to you or Jr. because I was slacking off while I was studying.”

“Roy, I appreciate the sentiment, but even with all the time we have, it’s unreasonable to expect you to know everything in a short period of time. EMTs and Paramedics do a rotation in ER to get first hand knowledge of this stuff. Book knowledge is great, but you have to realize you have no practical knowledge to go along with it. Besides, even with your best efforts, one of us could die just because we are so far from a hospital. I’ve lived here all my life, and I accept it, but you can’t feel guilty if something happens to us beyond your control or abilities. You’re not an MD, or a Surgeon. If you get a ruptured appendix out here, barring a major miracle, you’re going to die.”

Roy just stared at Anne; he’d never thought of it like that. He didn’t like it one bit, then he realized that he was a bit of a “Control Freak”. Suddenly Roy remembered a Bible Verse.

Ps 115:11 “You who fear the LORD, trust in the LORD; He is their help and their shield.”

Roy felt badly because he knew better than not to trust the Lord to take care of him and his family. He took Anne’s hands in his and told her what he just thought. Anne broke out her Bible, located Psalm 115, and read it. Most of her studies until now were in the New Testament, so she had a bunch of questions. Roy explained that most of the book of Psalms was written by King David, a great king of Israel, yet he had his faults. This particular psalm may have been written by Moses or one of his compatriots.

“Roy, you’re telling me this was written over 2,000 years ago?”

“Anne, actually some parts of the Old Testament are so ancient they can’t be accurately dated. Some passages go back to the start of recorded history.”

“That is so amazing, that a writer 2,000 plus years ago wrote something that means so much today.”

“Anne, I believe the entire Bible is the inspired word of God, he may not have put pen to ink himself, but the writers of the Bible were definitely writing at God’s direction.”

“What about all the translations? Just from what little I know, there seems to be major differences between different Bibles.”

“OK, here’s my understanding of it - the Original Texts were the Word of God, Man took the Ancient Greek and Aramaic and translated it first into Latin, then into English, French, Spanish and other languages. The differences can mostly be accounted for by differences in translation. English is a modern language, and is still evolving. When the King James Version was written over 300 years ago, English was a totally different language. Words have changed meaning, new words evolved, and old ones went out of use.”

“Roy, thanks for answering the question, but I really didn’t need a Doctoral Thesis explanation. Can we go fishing or something - you need to get out of the house.”

Roy put up his books, Anne grabbed the fishing rod and tackle box while Roy put on his shoulder holster. It was easier to put on today, hopefully that meant he was getting better. Next he belted on his fanny pack, then helped Anne with her shoulder holster and fanny pack. Then they walked out to the lake, stopping to water the garden. As they reached the lake, they turned north to their favorite fishing hole. Roy kept a sharp lookout for marauding bears. Finally they reached the spot, Anne baited the lure, and handed the rod to Roy, who promptly heaved the lure way out into the lake.

“Oops, guess my strength is coming back.”

“That’s OK, Roy, it just means you’ll get more of a workout reeling it back in.”

Roy started reeling the line back in, when he thought he was snagged on a log, until it started moving. Whatever he had hooked was HUGE. Roy carefully set the drag so as not to snap the line, and still land the fish. This one wasn’t going without a fight, and pulled like it was a contestant in a Tractor Pull. Finally, the fish tired, and Roy was able to gain ground after a half-hour of fighting it. When the water got shallow enough to see it, the fish looked different than anything he had caught before. He asked Anne what he had caught, and she looked at the fish, and it was almost 2 feet in diameter, and almost 3 feet long.

“I’m not sure what you caught, but whatever it is, its’ a Whopper.”

When he finally landed it, and Anne got a good look at it, she asked Roy to release it if he could. Anne thought it was a mature breeding female lake trout and it looked like it was ready

to give birth. Roy grabbed his multipliers, and without touching the fish any more than necessary, unhooked it and let it swim away. Anne explained that one pregnant female could re-populate a huge part of the lake. Roy was glad he let her go, because he wanted to catch more fish. Roy fixed the lure, and cast out into the lake again, this time a little less far. As the lure settled, he felt a tug on the line, and set the hook. By the way it was fighting him, Roy figured he had hooked another big fish. As he got it closer to shore, the fish's colors started to show, it was a big huge Lake Trout, and it had an iridescent color to its body, almost like a rainbow trout, but Roy knew that Rainbows never got this big. He brought it into shore, and after removing the hook, put it on his stringer. He guessed it weighted 10 pounds easy. Roy landed a few more large fish, then called it a day. On the way back, they watered the garden, and Anne picked some fresh vegetables for dinner. When they got to the cabin, Roy set the fish on the table, and Anne quickly gutted and cleaned the fish while Roy put up the fishing gear, and re arranged the smokehouse, taking down meat that was done and bringing it inside to store. Anne kept 2 fillets for dinner, then Roy put the rest in the smokehouse, built a new fire, and closed the door. As afternoon became evening, Anne got dinner ready and Roy read his medical books. Anne gave Roy a 5-minute warning, so he cleared off the table quickly, set the places, and took the plates in to Anne so she could plate the food. Anne had gone all out with the vegetables, and served a butter and garlic sauce with the carrots, greens and onions. She made fried fish for the main course, and baked biscuits in the Dutch Oven, which she covered with an Orange Marmalade Glaze. Roy was drooling just smelling the good food. He helped Anne get seated, then quickly sat down and said grace. When he was finished eating, he asked Anne "How much longer until you think we can go hunting. I wanted to get a couple of trips in before you were too far along to go with me."

"Roy, we went over this yesterday. I still say it will take at least a couple of weeks to regain full strength and flexibility in your left arm. I know you're right handed, but you still have to pull that big heavy cart loaded with whatever we shoot."

"Ok, Dear, you know best. I just remembered something. I need to fix you up a day bag like mine, and we need to upgrade the first aid kits in both bags."

"Roy, I'm glad you mentioned that, when you taped up Oliver's bandage with duct tape, I cringed. They make a product called Vet Wrap that is much better for that job since it only sticks to itself."

"I know Anne, I was thinking of putting Coach Wrap in my kit, but the Duct tape can do that job, and a bunch others. When everything you need to survive has to fit in a small fanny pack, everything has to perform multiple jobs, or be indispensable. Tell you what, you make a list of the medical supplies you'd like to carry with us in your day bag, and we'll call Bill and order it. I wanted to get you a daybag with the 90oz Camelback hydration unit anyway. Plan on no more than 30 pounds of gear, plus the water to keep the load light. We will still wear our fanny packs, but this will give us some redundancy, and greater depth with the first aid kits. I'll carry the spare ammo for the rifle and the pistols since I can carry more weight, and you can carry the

first aid kit since you'll probably use it anyway. Do you think 25 rounds of .308, 50 of .44 magnum, and 100 .22 rounds would be enough? That's not including the 2 spare 15-round mags each for the .22's, the 2 speed loaders each we're carrying for the .44 magnums, and the 5 rounds in the magazine of the .308."

"Roy, I think that's more than enough. We've got 6 rounds in the Anacondas each, 12 additional rounds in 2 speed loaders each times 2 people equals 36 rounds between the two of us, plus 50 additional is 86 rounds. Unless you're planning on starting WWII, it should be more than enough. Let's call Bill and have him order the stuff. I have a pretty good idea what I need."

Roy broke out the radio, set the tuner to Bill's frequency, turned it on, and keyed the mike, "Roy Williams calling Bill, you still awake there Mayor?"

"Roy, I was just shutting down for the night, what can I do for you?"

"Anne needs to order a daybag like mine with the 90oz Camelback insert, and she has a list of medical supplies she wants to buy to fill it."

"Hi, Bill, it's Anne, OK- Here's the list." Anne started reading off a list to Bill, as he wrote furiously. Finally, he read back the entire list, said it would take about a week to order all the stuff and get it delivered. Anne said that would be fine, told the Mayor goodnight, and signed off.

"Roy, Bill said it would take about a week to deliver the stuff I ordered, so it will work great."

"I heard some of the stuff you ordered, what are you planning on doing, opening an ER?"

"No, silly, Steve gave me a list a long time ago of the stuff I'd need to make a mini-paramedic kit, and most of this stuff is designed by the military. I also ordered 2 Katadyn Voyager purifiers to filter drinking water. Your guts may be used to drinking straight out of the lake, but I can't risk dehydration after a couple of months. I also ordered a few spare filters so I can use it in the house."

"Anne, you are one smart lady." Roy went back to his studies, and Anne read her Bible until they went to bed.

Chapter 33 - The Wait is Almost Over

The remaining time passed quickly, but not quickly enough for Roy, who was getting a bad case of Cabin Fever. He did his exercises, and increased his strength and flexibility daily. About a week had passed when one morning they were awakened by the sound of a plane coming in for a landing. They got dressed quickly, and by the time Jim's plane had taxied to their door, they were fully dressed and ready to help unload. This was a fairly light load compared to the usual, but several boxes were marked Fragile from a Medical Supply company in Washington. When they finished, Anne asked Jim if he could stay for breakfast, Jim declined saying he had a full schedule ahead, and thanked her for the offer. Jim got back in his plane, turned around and taxied out to the lake to take off. When they walked back into the cabin, Anne started opening boxes, and took out the packing list from the Medical Supply Company. Dang, Steve's account must still be good, since they shipped Morphine and other drugs you need a DEA number to order. Anne was glad to get it while she could.. As she looked over the list, she saw auto injectors with pre-measured dosages of Morphine, Atropine, Epinephrine, Benedryl, and a couple of local anesthetics. Also it had IV kits including D5W, Ringer's, and Plasma. They were specially packaged for long-term storage at room temperature or above. They also included bandages, Vet Wrap in case Oliver needed bandaging again, tape, a Burn Kit, a Sawyer Extractor, and foil packets of triple antibiotic, cortisone cream, Aloe Vera, burn gel, alcohol preps, a couple of CPR masks and a box of hypoallergenic Latex-free exam gloves and Providine Iodine.

Next, Anne unpacked a day pack with a Camelback HAWG hydration pack, and carefully packed the medical kit inside, as well as a few other items she might need. When she finished, she lifted the pack and tested the weight, right around 30 pounds, she'd be fine. She opened the last box, and remembered she ordered the Katadyn Voyager purifier, and added it to the kit, keeping the spare filter in the cabin storage shelf. Before she closed the bag, she got a couple of Ziploc bags, and took 10 pairs of gloves, and about a half-dozen of the foil packed items out of each box, and repacked them in bag. It took a lot less room, and was a little lighter. She figured if she needed more than that - they really needed an ER anyway. She took the camelback out of the bag, took it to the sink, and rinsed it out, then let it air dry. Later she'd fill it using the Katadyn Voyager purifier. While she was doing that, Roy took out his bag, and repacked it, putting the spare ammo on the bottom, then the change of socks and underwear, then some jerky and other dried foods in Ziploc bags, and the tarp and 2 Mylar sleeping bags. Roy didn't want to be weighed down with sleeping bags and a tent, so he brought the tarp and the Mylar bags just in case. Normally he liked sleeping under the stars, and hoped Anne did too. When they finished, Anne made breakfast as Roy hit the books. As he learned more medical terminology, he started covering more material in a shorter period since he didn't have to look stuff up as much. He was starting in Anatomy and Physiology. Luckily for him, Anne didn't make him memorize the Latin names for all the bones and muscles - he could use the vernacular. She wanted him to know the names well enough to be able to read the books, so he spent the last week working through Gray's Anatomy. Some of the stuff was enough to make

Roy worry about losing his lunch. He got through those parts quickly, and was still passing the tests with 85% or better. Soon, breakfast was ready, and Roy set aside his work. Anne fed him a large plate of scrambled eggs, pancakes, bacon and real maple syrup. Real maple syrup was cheaper in Alaska due to the lower shipping costs from Canada. When they finished, Roy resumed his studying, and Anne read her Bible. Around noon, Roy decided to take a break, and put his books up.

“Anne, do you think we could go hunting tomorrow?”

“Roy, I thought you’d Never Ask. Sure, I’m packed already.”

Roy took out his knife and hatchet and sharpened them to a razor edge, then sharpened Anne’s knives. Next he cleaned and lubricated all the guns, and made sure all the screws were tight, and then he unloaded and reloaded the mags in the .22’s to exercise the springs. When he was finished, he chambered a round, set the safety on, and topped off the mag from a partial box of ammo so he’d have a full one in his bag. He also loaded the Browning .308 A-Bolt and set the safety, and inspected the rounds in both Colt Anacondas and reloaded them. He double checked the ammo boxes in his bag to make sure they were full, then went through his fanny pack to make sure everything that was supposed to be there was there. Then he went through Anne’s fanny pack. When he was satisfied everything was shipshape, he walked out to the smokehouse, took out all the meat that had dried, and refilled his dried meat container in the cabin. Since there was no meat that needed drying, he closed the door and left it as it was. Roy was ready to go hunting tomorrow, so he went back to his studies until dinnertime. They ate dinner early and got to bed right after dark so they could get up at daybreak to go hunting.

The next morning dawned early, and Roy got dressed quickly in his buckskins without starting a fire in the fireplace. As soon as they were dressed, Anne made breakfast, and they ate as the sun was rising. As soon as they finished, Anne took out her Katadyn Voyager filter and filled both of their Camelback hydration bags, and their canteens. Anne couldn’t take the chance she’d need to drink from Roy’s water supply to leave his unfiltered. As soon as they were ready, Anne put the fire out in the stove, closed the damper, and they put on their shoulder holsters, fanny packs, and day bags. They felt like they were loaded for an expedition, but it wasn’t quite that bad. Anne took the Browning .308 off the shelf, double checked the safety was on, and slung it over her shoulder. While Anne secured the cabin door, Roy walked around the side to grab the travois. Since it was unloaded, he decided to push it instead of pulling it. He met Anne around front, and he took a quick compass bearing, and they set off.

As they were walking through the woods, Roy noticed the trees and flowers were in bloom. It was much prettier than in Winter. All the yellow and blue flowers combined with the green leaves of the Aspens, Poplars, and various Conifers. The sights and smells seemed new to him, and he took it all in. He saw rabbits bounding across the clearing and squirrels foraging for nuts and other stuff to eat. While he was watching all the scenery, he was also keeping an eye out for larger predators, since they didn’t have Oliver with them. Roy felt that even with an arm at

80% he was good enough to protect Anne from anything out here. They sipped out of their Camelbacks as they walked, and Roy handed Anne some jerky to chew until they could stop for dinner that evening. The trip to the first night's camping spot passed uneventfully. Anne refilled their camelbacks and canteens from the nearby stream with her Voyager purifier, and Roy gathered firewood. Anne noticed small fish in the stream that looked like brook trout, and they looked big enough to eat. She called to Roy, who handed her his emergency fishing kit out of his fanny pack. It consisted of a 35mm film can wrapped with 10/50 Spyderwire, and filled with 1/8oz. Chartreuse lead head jigs with plastic lures. She tied one of the lures to the end of the line, paid out about 10 feet, and quietly tossed it upstream of the fish she saw. As the bait bumped along the bottom, Anne got a good hold on the line in case the fish took the bait. Sure enough, one of them was hungry or stupid enough not to realize it was a fake until it was too late, and Anne set the hook and quickly pulled the fish in. She let it flop on the ground while she went after his buddy. He must not have been one of the brighter crayons in the box, because he grabbed it too like it was a minnow, and within 5 minutes, Anne had dinner on the bank. Meanwhile, Roy had the fire going, so Anne cleaned and gutted the fish, then Roy stuck them on a forked stick to cook over the fire. Roy turned them frequently to keep them from burning, and when they were done, Roy handed Anne one of the fish, said a quick grace, and started eating the fish right off the stick. When they were finished, they tossed the remains into the fire to burn so they wouldn't leave a smell. As it got dark, Anne and Roy gathered downed leaves and branches to make a comfortable bed. Instead of crawling into separate Mylar bags, Roy unfolded his Mylar blanket, and spread it over them. It barely covered them but since they weren't taking their clothes off, they were comfortable between the small fire and the Mylar blanket. Anne fell asleep in Roy's arms.

They woke up at first light, and they walked a short ways into the bushes to take care of business. Anne handed Roy a tube of Purell to wash his hands with, then they broke camp and packed their gear. Roy took another compass bearing to the spot where he remembered the Moose were hanging out, and set off. They were walking through a large clearing, so Roy wasn't as careful as on the first day, so they made better time. Halfway to the Moose spot, Anne spotted a Huge brown bear about 50 yards away. She quietly got Roy's attention, then whispered to him "Should I take it?" It was a huge bear, and would provide a lot of meat, and it was closer than hiking another day to the moose area. Roy knew Anne could make the shot easily from past experience, so he told her to go ahead. Anne pulled her Colt Anaconda out of the shoulder holster, took a nice solid stance, and thumbed back the hammer. Just in case, Roy drew his revolver too. The bear was sideways to Anne and she waited for a clean heart/lung shot. Finally the bear moved and she had the shot. As the .44 Magnum boomed, the bear roared, charged maybe 10 yards toward them, then fell over. When the Bear was down, Anne looked over and smiled to see Roy was backing her up, but trusted her marksmanship enough not to fire until the bear got too close. The bear was down at the edge of the clearing about 40 yards away from them, so Roy picked up the handles of the cart and maneuvered it over to the head of the bear while Anne kept her gun out just in case. When they got to the bear, he was deader than a doornail. Anne holstered her Anaconda, and helped Roy attach the sling to the bear to winch it onto the cart. When they got the sling around the bear, Roy tilted the cart so

that the bear would slide up the cart. He started cranking on the winch, but his left shoulder started hurting, so he asked Anne to help. Together they got the bear onto the cart and the cart balanced. Once they were good to go, Roy took a bearing back to their camp from last night, and they set off for home. Later that afternoon, they arrived at camp, and they debated skinning and gutting the bear there. Anne wanted to, but Roy told her they could feed Oliver's family with the guts and leftovers. Anne didn't think it was a wise idea to feed wild wolves, but didn't say anything. They made camp, and Anne caught some more fish for dinner. Since the bear stank, they moved it downwind of the camp. They went to bed at dusk and got up at first light for the trip home. Anne led, and Roy followed dragging the cart behind him. He was glad they shot the bear, because he wasn't sure he could drag a Moose that far, even with a wheeled cart. Later that afternoon, they made it to their cabin. Nothing seemed out of place, so they walked right on up. After checking out the interior, Roy helped Anne butcher the Bear. When they were finished, Roy whistled and Oliver appeared right on cue with his family, like someone rang the dinner bell. Roy realized they could probably smell the bear, and just wanted some of it. Oliver was looking better, and had bitten the bandage off his paw. Roy skinned the bear as Anne gutted it. She piled the guts they weren't going to use (she kept the heart and liver, and most of the bear fat to make sausages with) and piled the rest on the ground for the wolves. When he removed the skin, Roy took his <skip> and cracked the bear's skull, and brain tanned it, then set it on the smokehouse roof to dry. Meanwhile Anne was taking the choice cuts of meat off the carcass and carrying them into the house. She left some of the meat on the bones for the wolves. When she was through, she wheeled the cart over to the garbage pile and dumped it. The wolves set upon the carcass as soon as she was clear. She knew the carcass would be clean by morning.

Anne walked back into the cabin, but instead of stopping at the table, kept going until she was in the back room. Roy heard her rummaging around, and went to investigate. Anne was unpacking a box full of canning gear: A pressure canner, canning jars with lids, and a canning book. She took the book into the main room and sat down to read it by the light. She quickly read up on canning wild meat. She told Roy to cut the bear meat into pieces just big enough to fit into the jar. As he cut the meat, she got a pot of water boiling on the stove to sterilize the lids with. She had a set of tongs in the kit just for this, as well as a jar lifter. Once she got the water boiling, she dumped the lids into the boiling water and looked at her watch, then used the hot water from the sink to wash the glass jars since they could be damaged by direct exposure to boiling water like that. She then made the recommended brine solution, and Roy brought some pieces of bear meat for her to can. She set up the canner on the stove, and moved the hot water off the hot spot of the stove. She added the recommended water to the canner, set in the canning rack to keep the jars from banging against each other, then filled the jars with meat and brine, wiping the threads with a clean towel so the jar would get a good seal then set them in the rack. When the lids had boiled the required time, she used the tongs to pick them out of the hot water and place them on the canning jars that were already in the rack. She then loosely tightened the threads so it could form a vacuum as it cooled after the canning process. When she finished putting the lids on the jars, she closed and locked the lid, and monitored the steam pressure carefully. When it reached operating pressure, she started the timer someone had

packed in the kit. She carefully monitored the pressure, and either added wood, or moved the canner off the heat to keep the pressure constant. When the time was up, she tripped the pressure relief valve, and waited for the canner to cool. As it cooled, she heard the pleasant “Ping” of the lids sealing in vacuum. Finally, she took the jar lifter and lifted the canning jars out of the canner, and set them on the counter to cool. When they were cool enough to touch, she carefully tightened the lids finger tight, and left them alone. She processed several batches of bear meat, and when she was out of jars, she still had meat left over, so she got out the sausage kit, and made bear sausage out of the remainder. When she was finished, she told Roy to hang the sausages in the smokehouse and go ahead and start a fire under them, but don’t place the sausages right over the fire in case they dripped - she didn’t want a grease fire in the smokehouse. Anne made a note to order several more cases of canning jars. While she was doing this, Roy walked out to the garden and watered the garden, and came back with an armload of ripe vegetables. He cleaned them in the sink, and left them out of Anne’s way. Then he went back to his studies.

Later that evening, Anne made Bear Steak for dinner with mixed vegetables. Roy set the table for her, then said grace as the food was put on the table. Roy had a lot to be thankful for. Anne was multi-talented. After dinner, Roy leaned over and gave her a big kiss. Anne was confused, “What was that for?”

“Just because I love you so much, and you’re so multi-talented. You not only shoot dinner, you can skin it, cook it, can it, and even make sausage out of it.”

Anne laughed, “Why are you so amazed. I did this all the time growing up.”

“Susan thought steak came from the grocery store, and milk came in cartons. I could just see her skinning a bear she just shot, butchering the meat, canning some of it, and making sausage of the rest.”

“Roy, we’re two different people. I really didn’t like living in the city, and Susan probably thrived in the city. I could never chair a PTA meeting, or arrange a luncheon for 50 people.”

“Glad there’s no PTA around here - you’d probably shoot it, clean it and cook it.”

Anne laughed hysterically for a few minutes, then kissed Roy back.

Chapter 34 - The Morning After

The next morning, Roy woke up stiff and sore. Anne quickly started massaging his shoulders and back. Roy almost purred it felt so good. Then she hit a “pressure point” and he almost screamed, then the muscle relaxed and he felt better. When she was finished, Roy rolled over and gave her a massage, and a little more.

Several hours later, they finally rolled out of bed since both their bellies were grumbling, and Roy had to use the outhouse. Roy got dressed quickly and went outside to use the outhouse. Meanwhile, Anne got dressed and started breakfast. When Roy came in, he went over to the sink to wash his hands, then had another idea and grabbed Anne from behind as she stood in front of the stove.

“Down Boy, you got enough of that already.” Anne laughed and turned the sausages.

Roy didn’t give up so easily and started nuzzling her neck.

“Roy - if you don’t stop, I won’t be able to - and breakfast will get burnt.”

Roy decided to take the hint and cool his jets - for a while. He decided the safest action was to go back to reading his medical books while Anne finished breakfast.

Roy had just about finished Gray’s Anatomy, and Anne said she would give him a verbal quiz about what he studied. She wanted him to locate the part, its proper name, and function. Roy was not looking forward to it. Anne told Roy that breakfast was ready - “Saved by the bell” thought Roy. He quickly cleared off his place, and Anne carried two plates full of food. Roy noticed she had been piling the food on the plates lately, and took his life in his hands by commenting “Eating for Two?” decided that discretion was the better part of valor, and ducked quickly as she threw a dirty towel at him. After breakfast, Roy resumed where he left off, but Anne spoiled his plans by continuing to massage his neck. Taking the hint, Roy turned around quickly and kissed her on the neck. Judging by her response, he decided to continue this on the bed, and guided her onto the bed. When they woke up later that afternoon, it was almost time for dinner. Roy remembered he needed to water the garden, and Anne said she needed to call Bill to order some more canning jars. While she broke out the radio, Roy got dressed again, then watered the garden and picked an armful of fresh vegetables. When he came back in, Anne was busy in the kitchen getting ready for dinner, so Roy washed the vegetables, then went back to his books. Anne decided to make Bear Stew for dinner, and opened one of the jars of bear meat. She tested the lid, and it was sealed tight. She was glad she remembered how to do this, since if she’d gotten it wrong, she could have ruined the whole batch of bear meat. She put the big Dutch Oven on the stove, started the fire, and added the bear meat when the Dutch Oven was good and hot. After browning the meat, she added enough water to cover, and the vegetables, then she covered it with the lid and sat down to read her Bible.

Chapter 35 - The Big Quiz

The next morning, Roy woke up and got dressed, Anne rolled out of bed, and went to start breakfast. While breakfast was cooking, Roy opened his books - he knew today was the day of the big quiz and he needed to study. When breakfast was ready, he put his books aside, and ate quickly, then got right back to studying. Around Noon, Roy announced he was ready, and Anne took his books and notes away from him.

“OK, first we’re doing to do the hard part - I’ll say the name of the bone or muscle, and you have to describe where it is, and what it does. For example - If I were to say “Pectoralis Major, you would say. Major muscle of chest, anterior of chest wall, responsible for extending the arm forward.”

With that they began.

An hour later, Roy was sweating bullets, because Anne had worked her way to the bones of the hands and feet. There were tons of little bones in there, and he wasn’t sure if he remembered them all. He felt he was doing OK. Anne kept the pressure up, alternating between muscles and bones. Finally she felt he knew enough Anatomy and Physiology to start studying the circulatory system and the nervous system. She put his book down, and walked over to where he sat. “Roy, I have some great news, You Passed. I think you only missed 5 questions.”

“Is that all? I was afraid I totally messed up on the bones of the hand.”

“Well I gave you partial credit on some of those - I have a hard time keeping them straight myself.

Roy spent the next couple of days studying the medical books, and tending the garden. Finally the canning jars and lids Anne ordered showed up, Roy and Anne helped Jim unload them. In all, there were 12 cases of quart Mason canning jars and lids. Jim was complaining about the weight and the fact that he had to pancake the landing to avoid breaking half of them. Roy asked Jim if he could use a bearskin. Jim’s eyes lit up, and Roy walked over to the smokehouse and rolled the bearskin up and gave it to him. Jim asked him how much he wanted for it - and Roy told him it was a gift. Jim’s smile turned into an ear-to-ear grin. “Thanks Roy, I really appreciate it. You know a good bear skin can bring several hundred dollars on the market?”

“Don’t worry about it, there’s many more out there where that came from.”

Jim took the skin, shook Roy’s hand, and walked to his plane, put the skin in the back, fired up the plane, turned around and taxied out to the lake, then took off.

Roy walked into the house, and Anne was sorting through the boxes. Each box had 10 jars, and each case had 5 boxes, for a total of 50 jars. Combined with what she already had, that was over 600 jars, more than enough to take care of the garden, plus any meat Roy harvested. After they got the jars organized, Anne grabbed her Ball Book, and started looking up canning recipes for the various vegetables she needed to can. When she was finished, she got a pot of boiling water going to sterilize the lids and rings, then used the hot water to wash the jars. Finally she put the canner on the stove on a cold burner, then they went out to the garden with the cart and started harvesting the garden. They picked carrots, onions various squash, radishes, cabbage and garlic. He left the salad greens in the ground to pick as needed. When they were finished, they wheeled the cart back to the house, and Roy helped Anne wash and prepare all the veggies for canning. Anne moved the canner over to a hot burner, added the required amount of water, and started filling jars full of veggies to process. They had an assembly line going, and quickly processed all the veggies they had picked. Anne still had half the jars left over, which was about right by her estimates, since the last time she canned Bear meat, it took almost half of what she had available.

When they finished canning, it was almost time for dinner, so Anne made Bear stew with some leftover vegetables and a can of bear meat.

Roy went back to his studies after dinner, and Anne read her Bible.

The next morning, Roy remembered that he had planted Potatoes, and they were just about due to be harvested. After breakfast, they grabbed the spade fork, a big bucket, and the cart. Roy pushed the cart out to the potato patch, and started digging carefully - he didn't want to ruin the potatoes. As he turned the soil, potatoes of various sizes came to the top. Anne picked them out of the dirt, added them to the bucket. Soon she ran out of room in the bucket, and started setting them onto the cart. The potatoes ranged in size from about the size of a golf ball to the size of a grapefruit. Some were round, some were oval, and some were just ugly. They all looked healthy, so Roy turned the green part of the plant under, and left some smaller tubers in the patch to go to seed and re-populate the patch for next year. Roy estimated he had between 50 and 80 pounds of potatoes. Anne shook her head, and said, "Guess that means we're going to need more jars."

"Anne, if we store them in a cool dark place, they don't need to be canned. Once they start to show signs that they are getting to the point that they start sprouting, then we should can the rest of them. Unless you want to make fish or clam chowder, or a stew with potatoes and can that." When they were finished, Anne said she felt like fish for dinner, and asked Roy if they could go fishing. He got up, put on his gear, helped Anne into hers, and got the fishing stuff. They walked hand in hand down to the lake, and Anne carried the tackle so Roy could keep his hands free, just in case. They walked to their favorite fishing hole, and while Anne was baiting the hook, Roy made a careful visual sweep of the area, on the lookout for large predators. He turned back to the lake just as Anne cast the line out into the lake. She quickly found the spot where the fish congregated, and quickly had 4 large lake trout on her stringer. They decided to

call it quits, and headed back to the cabin. When they got back, Anne quickly skinned, gutted, and filleted the fish, saving one for dinner. She gave the rest to Roy so he could put them in the smokehouse. He walked out to the smokehouse, and put the fish on the top rack where the smoke was the hottest. While he was in there, he removed some of the fish that was dry, and brought it into the cabin. He put it in his dried meat bin to keep. When he came back into the living room, he asked Anne if she wanted to go hunting again soon, since he was feeling much better. Anne said OK, and told Roy she needed to call Bill and order some more canning jars and lids, since she had just enough to process another large animal. Roy nodded, and Anne got the radio out, and Bill's first comment was "what are you guys doing - opening a dry goods store?"

Anne had to laugh, then said that they just wanted to stock up for the winter. Roy may be OK subsisting on Jerky all winter, but she wanted some real food.

Roy just had to shake his head and laugh at the situation. He was becoming Domesticated - and he wondered if that was why Oliver had bugged out on him - maybe the other wolves were laughing at him becoming domesticated? Roy spent the rest of the day studying, and Anne made fried fish fillets and Freedom Fries for dinner.

Chapter 36 - Hunting With Oliver...And Family

The next morning Roy and Anne were up at first light, ate a quick breakfast, checked and donned their packs, shoulder holsters, and fanny packs. Anne grabbed her rifle, and they walked out front. Roy made sure the door was closed, then walked around to pick up the cart, and he stopped suddenly when he saw Oliver, Francine and 4 well-grown pups. Roy looked at Oliver and said "You want to go hunting Oliver?" The grin and the wagging tail said it all. Roy led the pack around the front, and said to Anne "Looks like we're going to have some company on this hunt."

"Roy, do you think that's a good idea? What if they spook the game, or otherwise interfere with our hunting?"

"Anne, don't worry - before I met you, Oliver and I went hunting together all the time, and he never spooked game. Unlike domestic hunting dogs, wolves are natural stealth hunters and can sneak up on game better than we can."

"OK Roy, if you say so. I'll be glad Oliver is there to keep watch while we sleep."

"Hang on a second Anne - I'm going to go inside and pack more dried fish so we can feed the wolves for a couple of days." Roy walked into the back of the cabin, and took enough dried fish to last the wolves a week. The last thing Roy wanted was to be around a pack of hungry wolves. He packed it in 2 freezer Ziploc bags to eliminate the smell of food. When he added the food to his bag, he shouldered the bag and went back outside. Anne was busy petting Oliver and the pups. Francine was a little more standoffish since she wasn't habituated to humans. Finally she warmed up to Anne and walked over to join her pups who were getting vigorously petted by Anne. Once Roy appeared, they stopped and watched Roy. All of a sudden, the wolves packed up, formed a circle, and started howling.

Roy didn't understand at first, then remembered a show he had watched on Discovery channel about Wolf behavior and remembered they said something about a pack of wolves howling before they went hunting as a pack bonding ritual. As Roy picked up the cart and headed off, Oliver stopped howling and the rest of the pack stopped. When Anne followed Roy, the rest of the pack followed Anne. As Roy and Anne hiked into the woods heading to where the moose and caribou were hopefully, the wolves ranged about 100 yds away, always keeping Roy in sight, but roaming freely, investigating their surroundings. Meanwhile Oliver was busy marking their territory. Roy laughed and hoped Oliver had drunk a lot of water, since there were millions of trees between their cabin and their overnight spot. Oliver solved that problem by drinking from nearby streams that meandered through the forest. Roy walked quickly, knowing that Oliver would alert him to any large predators.

About halfway to their overnight stop, Roy spotted a bunch of snowshoe rabbits feeding about 40 yards away. Quickly setting down the cart, and drawing his Ruger 22/45, he shot all 10 rabbits before any of them realized their friends were deceased. "Looks like we're eating Rabbit tonight" Roy said as he quickly gathered the bodies of the rabbits. Most of them were almost 5 pounds each, and had a nice furry coat they could use for stuff at home, maybe a pair of furry bunny slippers for the Mommy to be. Roy put the them on the cart, then started walking again. Amazingly none of the wolves pestered him. A couple of hours later, they arrived at their campsite. Roy dropped the cart, gathered some wood, and started a fire, then started skinning and gutting the rabbits. Anne said, "I really don't feel like roasted rabbit for dinner, I'm going to try and catch some more fish", took her fishing kit and walked over to the stream. "This must be a good spot for Brook Trout" she thought, because there were 4 more large brook trout in the same spot as last time. She quickly tied the lure onto the fishing line, unraveled about 20 feet of line, then spinning the lure in a circle, cast the lure just upstream of the brook trout. As the lure floated down, one of the fish grabbed it, and Anne set the hook, then quickly hauled it in. She left the fish on the bank next to her, and caught the rest of the fish in about ½ hour. By now Roy had the rabbits skinned and gutted, and the bodies roasting over the fire. Anne carried the fish back to the fire, cleaned and scaled the fish, then stuck them on sticks to roast by the fire.

When everything was finished cooking, Roy turned to the now drooling Oliver, "What do you wish to order, we have fish and rabbit on the menu today." Oliver was looking hungrily at the roasting rabbit, so Roy said, "Very well - Rabbit it is - Bon Appetit." Roy took one of the rabbits and set it in front of Oliver, then set 2 more in front of the pups. That left Francine. Anne offered her a roasted brook trout, and Francine decided that hanging out with humans wasn't such a bad idea and dug in. Roy bowed his head and said a quick grace, because he realized that if he wasn't eating by the time the wolves finished eating, he might have a fight on his hands. Roy ate quickly and Anne noticed Roy's haste, then realized she was eating within 6 feet of a pack of wolves, and broke her previous speed records for chowing down. Once they were finished eating, Roy cracked the skulls of the rabbits, and preceded to brain tan them.

"Roy, I'm glad you waited until after dinner to do that, or else I would have lost my appetite, and I would have been very upset with you.

When he was finished, he washed his hands in the creek, and rolled the skins up and stuck them inside his bag. When Oliver had finished eating, he walked over to Roy, sat down in front of him and started licking Roy's hand. Roy took his other hand and started petting Oliver, soon Oliver was rolling over practically begging Roy to rub his belly. Roy obliged, and soon it was like old times. With their bellies full, the pups got playful, and ganged up on Francine. Anne watched with amusement until the pups ran out of steam, and got off their mom. Francine curled up in front of Anne and Anne gently started stroking her fur. The pups had an exciting day and decided to call it quits, so they laid down for a quick doggie nap. When it started to get dark, Anne got up and moved next to Roy, they shared a Mylar blanket between them and used their packs for pillows. The wolves curled up on either side of them, with Oliver next to Roy

and Francine curled up next to Anne. The pups were split equally between them, and soon they were all fast asleep. Roy knew he was safe, and quickly fell into a deep sleep.

When he awoke, it was morning, as soon as he stirred, Oliver and the pups on his side got up and out of his way. Roy walked over to a tree to take care of a very full bladder. Finally Anne woke up, and as soon as Francine and the pups were clear, she headed into the woods to take care of business. When everyone was finished watering the trees, Roy broke out the water filter, and refilled their water containers, then broke camp and put the fire out. Roy and Anne put on all their gear, then Roy remembered he'd forgotten to reload his 22/45, set his pack down, dug out the box of .22 shells, reloaded the magazine, and stuck it back in the butt of the gun and reholstered the gun. After he repacked the ammo in his bag, he shouldered the bag, grabbed the cart handles, and started off again toward the moose hollow. As he hiked further into the wilderness, he noticed the forest was changing from deciduous hardwoods and softwoods to conifers. He thought that they were either gaining altitude, or had just left a microclimate that supported the deciduous trees better than conifers. The conifers looked like original Old Growth forest, and Roy realized that no one had been this far in to log since it was over a day's travel from the cabin.

Roy knew his property went on for at least another 10 miles, because he wanted to make sure the caribou hunting grounds were well within his property to protect his hunting rights. If it were National Forest land, some bureaucrat might decide that he couldn't hunt there anymore, and he would have to move or starve. Towards the end of the day, they came to the area where the moose hung out. Roy set down the cart, and motioned to Anne to drop her backpack, and un-sling the rifle. Anne cranked a round into the chamber and made sure the safety was set. She thought it would be better to make all the noise they were going to make back here away from the moose hollow instead of near the herd. The wolves sensed that the moose were close too, and got real quiet and hunkered down to minimize their silhouette. Roy and Anne copied the wolves, and crouched down and moved slowly until they could see the clearing. There were a bunch of huge bulls and cows in the hollow. Roy whispered in Anne's ear to try and not shoot any moose in the mud pits, since it was a bear to haul them out. Most of the herd was further away today than last time, and Roy noticed the nearby hollows had dried out, but the ones on the far side of the clearing were full of mud and moose.

Anne selected 2 huge bulls - she figured one for them, and one for the wolves. She got into a good sitting position, rested the rifle on a large branch, put the crosshairs on a huge bull about 200 yards away - this would be a chip shot for her. Anne let the crosshairs settle on the neck of the bull, then zeroed in on the bull's spine, right where it joined the head, and as the sight picture steadied, she took off the safety, put her finger on the trigger, and gently squeezed the trigger. Roy was smart enough to put his fingers in his ears right before she shot, and as Anne pulled the trigger, a loud "BOOM" echoed around the valley. Anne saw the bull was down, and quickly reloaded to take the other bull. The other bull was just sitting there Fat Dumb and Happy when Anne's 180gr JSP 7.62 mm Sierra Boat Tail Bullet ruined his whole day. Anne saw that the 2nd bull was down too, moved the safety to the second position that locked the

trigger, but allowed her to cycle the bolt, extracted the shot round, put the spent rounds in her bag, and unloaded the rifle, then flipped the safety to the position that locked the entire rifle. Walking back to where she dropped her bag, she put them back on, and Roy picked up the cart. As they walked into the clearing, the rest of the herd spooked. Roy walked up to the first bull and saw its neck was broken. Roy was impressed, even at 200 yards, that was a pretty tough shot. He checked out the other bull, and noticed the bullet was in the exact same spot. Roy walked over to Anne.

“Remember when I called you Annie Oakley? Well, you’re a better shot than she was. By the way, which bull do you want to give the wolves?”

“It doesn’t really matter, they’re both over 1500 pounds. They’ll dress out to over 1000 pounds, plus the skins. Could you skin that moose so we can save the hide?”

“Good Idea, Anne. I’ll skin this one over here, and then I’ll let the wolves have at it while you skin and gut this other bull. Let me move the cart closer to you so you can put the meat on it.” Roy wheeled the cart near Anne’s moose, then walked over to the other moose, followed by the wolves. Roy took out his <skip>, and choking up, started skinning the moose. Since all he needed was the hide and the head, he was finished in over an hour, carried the hide to a waterhole, then picked up the head and carried it to the hide. Then he told Oliver “Go ahead - it’s all yours.” As the wolves feasted, Roy cracked the skull of the bull moose and started brain tanning the hide. When he finished, he rolled up the skin, put it on the cart, then washed his hands and walked over to help Anne. Anne had skinned and gutted the moose, and was starting to cut the meat into sections. Roy took the skin and the skull and carried it over to the waterhole, and cracked open the skull to brain tan the hide. About an hour later, he finished, washed his hands, rolled up the hide, and added it to the pile on the cart. Roy walked over to Anne, started picking up the cuts of meat as she butchered the carcass, and piled them on the cart.

Roy noticed the sun was getting low in the sky, and told Anne they had better prepare to camp here tonight. Anne told him to get set up while she finished butchering the moose. Roy walked back the way they had come to the edge of the clearing, found a nice patch of bare dirt, made a fire ring with the available flat rocks, and started gathering wood. He used his <skip> to chop the larger pieces into more manageable pieces, and to take some deadwood off some of the smaller trees. When he had a huge pile of wood, he took a smaller stick, and shaved it into a fuzz stick, then opened his fanny pack, extracted his MFS and striker, and a small piece of petroleum jelly saturated cotton, set it in the center of the fire ring, then took the striker, and threw a shower of sparks into the cotton, which ignited immediately. He held the fuzz stick over the flame until it caught, then set it over the cotton, and added several twigs, slowly building the fire. As the twigs caught, he added larger and larger wood a piece or two at a time until he had a nice fire going with about inch thick branches.

Roy sharpened two sticks to cook the moose meat on, and Anne brought over 2 of the choice

rib pieces. Roy threaded them onto the sticks, stuck the sticks in the ground at a 45 degree angle over the fire, and roasted the meat. Roy walked over to Anne, who had just finished butchering the moose, and helped her carry everything they wanted to the cart. Roy picked up the cart and wheeled it next to their camp, but moved it downwind of the fire. He knew the smoke would help keep any flies off the meat. While the meat roasted Roy and Anne took their canteens, and canteen cups out of the case, filled it with water, and set them next to the fire to heat up. When they were good and hot, they added a tea bag, and some sugar, and let it steep. Roy turned the meat, and let the other side cook. Roy was salivating over the smell of fresh roasted moose meat, and couldn't wait until it was done.

Anne was making plans for what she wanted to do with the meat, and asked Roy "I was thinking about what I wanted to do with all this meat. I really don't want to smoke all of it, I was figuring I'd can 1/2 of it, smoke 1/4 of it, and make the rest into sausage with the fat."

Roy told her, "That sounds good to me - I've never had moose sausage though."

"Boy are you in for a treat. Even the poorest cuts of moose make excellent sausage, and I have Ron's old recipe."

"Great Anne, I can't wait. I think we'll be OK tonight with the wolves chowing down 50 yards away. I don't think anything is going to come back here tonight." Roy checked the moose meat, and it was DONE. "OK, Anne - dinner's ready." Roy handed her a "mooscicle" as he called it - moose on a stick, and said a quick grace, then started eating the roast moose right off the stick. Anne had a little better manners, and used her knife to cut pieces off the stick. When they were finished, the tea was ready, and they sipped their tea as night fell. When the stars came out, Roy commented on how clear the night sky was. Anne said she remembered she couldn't see hardly any stars when she lived in Dallas, and she could see a whole bunch when she grew up in Alaska. Matter of fact, their old house was just over 50 miles west of Roy's cabin. Roy said he'd like to see it, and Anne said that it would have to wait, since they would have to fly there.

Suddenly, they heard a noise off to the side, in the dark area between them and the wolves. Roy immediately pulled his 22/45 and pointed it at the noise, but kept his finger off the trigger, since he never used the safety. A few seconds later, Roy recognized Oliver, but his face was covered with gore and blood. For a second, Roy panicked, then remembered that wolves were messy eaters, and didn't have knives and forks - they had to tear their meat off with their teeth. Oliver still looked like a mess, and then he licked his face, and it looked much better. As Oliver got near the fire, he could see that Oliver's belly was practically dragging on the ground. Oliver was one stuffed doggie. He sat down next to Roy with a groan, and didn't move. Roy reached over to pet Oliver, and he seemed to like it. A few minutes later Francine joined them, then the pups. They were all stuffed to the gills. As the fire died down, Roy and Anne wrapped up in a Mylar blanket, and the wolves snuggled up and they were soon fast asleep.

Chapter 36 - The Long Walk Home

The next morning, Oliver, Francine and the pups were slow to get up. Francine's belly was so big she looked pregnant, and Oliver's belly was still dragging. Even the pups were so full they could barely walk. Roy was in a hurry to get home, so he grabbed Anne's Katadyn Voyager filter, filled both their Camelback bags as well as their canteens, stowed the gear, and asked Anne if she wanted anything for breakfast, handing her a piece of jerky, she took it, but held on to it for later. She was almost as stuffed as the wolves. Roy broke camp, made sure the fire was out, rigged the harness of the cart so he could pull the cart, took a compass bearing back to their other overnight camp, and set off. This time Anne helped him get the cart over the short hill. Roy was glad for the help since his left arm hurt from the effort. Finally, they got it over the hill. "It's all downhill from here" Roy said to himself, then remembered HE was the brakes on this cart. He exerted as much energy going down the hill as going up, but it didn't hurt as much. As the slope eased off, Roy had an easier time with the cart, and noticed the flora and fauna. Roy was curious and asked Anne about different plants. A lot of them looked nothing like the pictures in the book.

On the way down, they stopped at a berry patch, after making sure there were no bears around, but the berries weren't ripe yet. That explained why there were no bears. Good thing too, since Oliver and Francine were still barely able to move. One of the pups was moving so slow that Roy was tempted to put him on top of the cart if he didn't think the little pig would eat the meat. Roy noticed Anne was dragging it too, and decided not to push it. Towards dusk, they arrived at their campground, and everyone except Roy plopped on the ground like they wouldn't even move if a bear showed up. Roy figured that fishing was counterproductive since everyone else was stuffed, so he started a fire, and noticing the clouds for the first time, took one of his trash bags, and constructed a primitive lean-to that would keep the rain off. As it got dark, the rain started. Roy and Anne were warm and dry, but Oliver, Francine and the pups were left outside. They snuggled as close to Roy and Anne as they could, and even snuck under the Mylar blanket to try to stay warm and dry. The next morning, Roy and Anne awoke to find they were sharing a blanket with 4 wolf pups. One of them licked Anne in the face, as if to say "Good Morning, thanks for the blanket." Anne scratched the neck of the pup, and he licked her hand. Roy commented that Anne had made a friend. Anne commented that he was probably just a compulsive suck-up, and knew that brown-nosing his mom and dad had its benefits. The rain had finally stopped, and since they were in a hurry, Roy refilled their water while Anne broke camp, and repacked their trash bag. With a heave, Roy picked up the handles of the cart, and slid on the shoulder harness. Roy thought they should be to the cabin by noon. Since it was flat ground, they should be able to make better time. Just as he thought, they made the cabin by noon. The wolves were so pooped that they just stayed outside the cabin for the night. Anne decided that now would be a good time to use the outhouse. As she walked into it, Roy heard a blood-curdling scream. He ran to her aid just in time to see a muskrat casually stroll out of the outhouse. A few seconds later, Anne came out and explained that she was about to sit down when she felt something furry next to her ankle. Roy tried not to laugh, but failed miserably.

“Anne, you should have seen the look in your eye as you came out here - you looked like you’d seen a ghost instead of a harmless little muskrat.”

“Harmless - that little bugger almost gave me a heart attack.”

“That’s why I always lit a candle when I used it during the winter, so I could see before I sat.”

After Anne’s pulse returned to normal, they went back in the cabin. Roy started cutting the large cuts of moose meat into smaller pieces that would fit inside a quart mason jar. Anne got the canning gear good to go as Roy filled the jars with moose meat, and carried them over to the stove. Anne quickly wiped the rims, and set them in the rack, and set the sterilized lids onto the jars, then loosely screwed the lids down. Once the canner was full, Anne moved it to a hot spot on the stove, closed the lid, and let the steam build up. Once it had reached operating pressure, Anne started a timer. When the timer went off, Anne moved the canner to the cooler part of the stove, and slowly released the pressure. When the gauge read zero, Anne heard several satisfying pings as the lids sealed down against the vacuum. Once they were fully cool, Anne lifted the jars out using a jar lifter, and set them on the shelf. When she was finished, Roy had cut some of the moose meat into strips for jerky, but had left a lot of scraps, chucks, and other pieces of meat that weren’t suitable for jerky. Anne took them, put it all in a plastic mixing bowl, added ½ of the volume in moose fat, added some cure (a spice blend including sodium nitrite), and mixed thoroughly. Next she clamped the meat grinder to the work table near the stove, and started grinding the meat, which blended the seasonings as well as the meat and fat. While she did that, she rinsed some sausage casings, got out the casing stuffing nozzle, and thoroughly cleaned everything. She made 2 passes through with the grinder, then took off the grinding blades, and installed the casing stuffer, and threaded several feet of casing onto the nozzle. When she was ready, she fed the hopper, and turned the crank, while adding more meat to the hopper, slowly sausage emerged from the other end, filling the casing. She twisted the casing every 6 inches to form links, and when she was finished, threw them into a pot of boiling water for a few minutes, then hung them to dry. When they were fully dry, she asked Roy to come in, and hang the sausage in the smokehouse away from the direct flame. He took 6 feet of sausage in with him at a time, and filled the smokehouse with jerky and sausage, then he set a fire in the smokehouse, and closed the door. Anne reminded Roy that he needed to keep it hotter in there with the sausage, so he would need to check it before dinner. Roy carefully cleaned off the table so he could study, and hit the books again. Anne made mooseburgers for dinner, and right before they were ready to eat dinner, Roy checked the smokehouse, and added some wood to the fire. Anne served mooseburgers, freedom fries, and mixed vegetables for dinner. Roy said a quick grace, and devoured his dinner. Roy guessed all that work made him hungry. After dinner, they read their Bible, and then went to bed exhausted.

Chapter 37 - Disaster

“Allakaket Control, this is PBY Flight 100”

“Go Ahead, Flight 100”

“Allakaket, We are declaring an In-Flight Emergency, We are experiencing Engine Failure and will attempt to land at Allakaket”

“Flight 100, Airspace is clear, just come straight in, Good Luck.”

“Flight 100, Roger. Mayday. Mayday May.....”

As soon as flight 100 had declared an Emergency, the Control Tower got all the fire equipment in town moving toward the airport. Bill was right in the middle of it. As he looked up, praying that his 2 friends would make it, one look told it all. The plane was in a near-vertical nosedive, and neither of the props were turning. The big Catalina crashed into the edge of the lake, and a few seconds later, a huge fireball mushroomed from the accident site.

“Oh, My God...NO.” was all Bill could yell. He knew no one could survive that crash. Jim ran up to Bill right after the crash.

“Bill, what happened, did they make it.”

“Jim, Steve and Pete are dead, their plane blew up on impact. They had a full load of Avgas and Diesel aboard. I heard them declare an emergency with both engines out, and as you know, a PBY loaded like that has the glide angle of a rock. Hopefully, I doubt if they survived the impact, let alone the fireball.

“Oh my God Bill - I knew both of those guys, and their families.”

“I know Jim, me too - can you help me with the radio. I need to call Anchorage and notify them of the crash, then I need to call their families.”

“Sure Bill - I’d like to be there when you call the families, since their wives both know me.”

Bill and Jim walked over to the tower, and got on the radio. First they called the FAA at Anchorage, and told them of the fatal crash. then they called the families. Afterward, the entire town met at the pub, to say the mood was somber was an understatement. Finally when he couldn’t stand the tension any more, Bill got up and addressed the crowd.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, by now I’m sure everyone in town has heard of the fatal crash of the PBY. I’d like anyone who is interested in attending a Memorial Service for the pilots to meet at the church tomorrow morning. Meanwhile, there are several issues of an emergency nature we need to address. I checked the fuel tanks just before we were to take delivery. The diesel tank has about 2,000 gallons left out of a 10,000 gallon tank that is supposed to last 6 months. We have about 3,000 gallons of Avgas left. I’m afraid we aren’t going to get any more until the FAA investigates this accident, and I know the people who supplied our fuels don’t own another PBY configured as a tanker. This could be all the fuel we have for the next 6 months at least. We’re going to have to suspend deliveries of Avgas, and save what’s left for Jim’s plane to service the homesteaders in outlying areas. Jim, I hate to tell you this, but all non-essential flights out of Allakaket are grounded until further notice. That means no more flying tourists to the hunting lodges unless you can fly safely round-trip from Anchorage with the fuel you can carry. This is going to be a hardship to the town, but I will join you in that hardship. I’m hereby putting all leases and rents in abeyance for people who are directly affected by the fuel shortage. That includes the inn, since I know they get 2/3 of their business from tourist traffic that unfortunately will stop. Jim, we need to tell the homesteaders they get 1 more flight each. We can either evacuate the ones that don’t want to remain over the winter, or fly in supplies to the ones that do. I’d highly recommend evacuating the hunting lodges, since they won’t be getting any business anyway. Some of them might want to stay, but make sure you tell them after their one flight, any flights better be for a major emergency until we get some more fuel.”

“Bill, what if I fly in a 500 gallon drop tank full of avgas and drop it in the lake.”

“Jim, I don’t think you could safely take off with that much weight, besides, 500 gallons is a drop in the bucket. When we refuel your plane, it takes almost 250 gallons of avgas. That 3,000 gallons of avgas will last about 6 trips, and even still you’ll need to have your tanks full every time you leave Anchorage.”

“Bill, I guess you’re right - Dang it, I hate it when you’re right.”

Despite some minor grumbling, the town pulled together for the emergency. People who had extra fuel stored gave it to their neighbors who were caught short. Since none of the other planes were flying without extra fuel, they could save it for winter to use in the snowmobiles to get around.

Jim took Bill aside, “Bill, you’re going to have to call the homesteaders today and give them the bad news, I know I was scheduled to make deliveries to several of them, and they might want to change their orders under the circumstances. I’ll have to work out the flights to save fuel, but I’m pretty sure I can give each homesteader a planeload of stuff, or about 500 pounds of cargo per trip. Anyone that wants to leave, I’ll pick up on the return trip when the plane is empty.”

“Thanks, Jim, I knew I could count on you.”

As the meeting broke up, Bill walked to his office and started calling homesteaders and giving them the bad news.

“This is the Mayor calling Roy and Anne - over” Bill repeated the call for about 5 minutes before Anne answered the call.

“Bill What’s up? We were listening to the radio when your call came in.”

“Anne, is Roy there?”

“Is everything OK?”

“Not really, I need to talk to both of you.”

“OK, I’ll get him.”

“Bill this is Roy, what’s going on.”

“Roy, we had a fatal crash today.”

”Oh My God, please tell me it wasn’t Jim.”

“No, it was the guys who deliver our fuel every 6 months. Their PBY Catalina developed engine trouble right before they got here - they tried to make the lake, and they crashed. The pilot and co-pilot were killed. Also, they were carrying 10,000 gallons of fuel for Allakaket. Since we are down to minimums, and won’t get any more for 6 months at least, I’m calling all the homesteaders and advising them they get about 500 pounds of supplies or we will evacuate them, it’s your choice.”

“Bill, can we get back to you? We need to take inventory around here and see what we need.”

“Almost forgot to tell you - there’s no fuel available for deliveries, so you have to get by on what you have.”

“Do you have any kerosene?”

“What we have in Allakaket is going to be strictly rationed, but maybe Jim can bring you some from Anchorage. It will be 2-3 times what you’re used to paying, and it’s heavy. Kerosene weighs almost 10 pounds per gallon by the time you add in the container.”

“Thanks for the info Bill, and please extend our condolences to the families of the pilots.”

“OK Roy, I’ll wait for you call back - but I need to know in a day or two.”

“Thanks, Bill, Over and Out.”

Roy and Anne just looked at each other for a while, finally Roy asked Anne what she wanted to do.

“Roy, I’d prefer to stay here with you if we can. This is a setback for us, but you survived without all those deliveries, and I’m sure we can.”

“What about the baby?”

“Roy, you know I can’t fly in another couple of months anyway, and the baby will be fine according to the OBGYN I talked to in Anchorage.”

“Weren’t you supposed to see her a couple more times?”

“Ordinarily, I should see her every 3 months, but she told me that as far as I had to travel to see her, it wasn’t worth the risk. She said I should be fine, that women had been giving birth thousands of years before there were doctors, or even midwives.”

“OK, Anne if you say so. We need to take inventory of everything we need. Also, we need to stock up on baby stuff - since it sounds like it could be a while.”

“I was going to go with disposable diapers, but with the emergency and all, we’d be better off with cloth diapers and a bunch of bleach. I’ll make a list of things I need, and you can inventory the supplies we need, then we can pare it down to the 500 pound limit.”

Roy got up, and went into the Kitchen, and was inventorying staples and canned goods. “Good thing we planted that garden” Roy thought “We won’t need as much canned vegetables as we would have otherwise.” Roy realized that he’d have to do without several categories of canned foods that were now luxuries, since he needed to save weight for baby stuff. Roy made a list of what they had in canned goods, then moved on to the staples. Then he inventoried their other supplies. They had 10 gallons of kerosene, and they went through maybe a gallon a month, even less now that they had the windows providing light during the day. “That should be enough” Roy thought. Next he went outside, inventoried the gasoline and oil. “Good thing Jim gave me that extra 5 gallon can last time.” Roy thought. He checked, and was thankful he had 4 full 5-gallon cans, and 1 partial can. Roy remembered it only took 1 gas can to build the room addition, so he knew that the chainsaw was easy on fuel. Next he checked the woodpile, and saw the logs laying there that needed to be sawn to length. Roy remembered he had a large bow saw that could make short work of those skinny 8 inch logs. He went inside, and checked for spare blades. He only had 1, and since they were light, he ordered 5 more, since he’d need them to cut wood and save gas for felling trees. He walked back outside, and checked the woodpiles. The back of the cabin was full, as well as the windbreak. The only place left to store wood was near his sawhorse between the house and the outhouse. He’d burn that wood last, since it was

the easiest to get to. Roy was grateful they were in as good a shape as they were. He went back inside to talk to Anne, who had just finished her list. Without a word, she handed her list to Roy, who read it:

- 4 dozen cloth diapers
- 2 dozen safety pins
- 3 5-pound containers of Shock-it (Concentrated Pool Bleach)
- 1 large 5-gallon bucket
- 50 pounds powdered laundry soap
- 10 pounds cornstarch baby powder
- Ointments and Moisturizers (Aloe Vera Gel and Destin) 1 case each
- 1 baby food mill
- 1 box baby clothes
- 5 cases of 1 qt. canning jars with lids
- Female Undergarments and “Girl Stuff”
- Boxers and socks for Roy
- 5-gallon bottle of Anti-bacterial soap
- Plastic 55-gallon trash bags
- Large diaper pail with tight-fitting lid.

Roy thought that Anne had thought of everything, so he didn’t need to add anything. Roy estimated the weight of what she ordered, added the weight of the staples they would need, and realized they had enough weight to add 5 gallons of kerosene. Roy decided to ask Anne about it.

“Anne, I figured out all the weight of stuff we would need, and we have at least 50 pounds left, I have 10 gallons of kerosene on hand, and we go through about a gallon per month. I was thinking we should order another 5 gallons if Jim can get it. I figured what you wanted weighed about 100-150 pounds, I think we could use about 300 pounds of staples, and that leaves 50-100 pounds. Is there anything you think I missed?”

“Roy, did you order any canned goods?”

“Not yet, most of the stuff I wanted to order was what I would call luxuries like Spaghetti-o’s and Corned Beef Hash. We’ve got 5 cases of vegetables still on the shelf, plus some other stuff.”

“Sounds like we’ve got the canned goods and foodstuffs covered, go ahead and order the kerosene, we might need it for the winter.”

Roy went to the radio, and called the list into the Mayor. Bill said they’d deliver the stuff next week as soon as they had everyone’s orders in. He told Roy that so far, most of the homesteaders were staying. When he finished, he signed off, and broke out the charger.

Roy cranked steadily for about 10 minutes, then disconnected the charger and put the radio up. Roy asked Anne how many empty canning jars they had left, and she told him 3 cases. Roy was trying to decide whether he should fill them up with vegetables or go hunting again. Finally, he asked Anne. Anne pointed out they had 5 additional cases coming on the next shipment, and the garden was about ready to be harvested. Roy thought “No time like the present” and asked Anne if she’d like to join him in harvesting the entire garden. Anne grabbed her fanny pack and shoulder holster, and Roy put his gear on, then they grabbed the gardening implements they would need to harvest the garden, threw them on the cart, and pushed it out to the garden. Roy and Anne picked all the carrots, onions, cabbage, and whatever was left in the garden from the last time.

Roy asked Anne, “Do you think it would be worth planting another bunch of seeds?”

“It’s a little late to be planting anything now.”

“OK, I’ll seed then entire garden with the nitrogen fixers and then we’re finished for the year.” He took out the packet of seeds, and quickly broadcast them throughout the garden. Roy didn’t have to be careful, he wanted the planting to be random, and he would turn the soil under right before the first snow to enrich the soil. When he finished, he watered the garden, and took all the vegetables back to the cabin. While he cleaned and chopped the vegetables into sizes that would fit into the canning jars, Anne got everything ready to can. When Roy was finished, Anne took the vegetables and dumped them into a stock pot of boiling water, then quickly scooped them into the cleaned and prepped canning jars. Once everything was in the canner, Anne put the lids on the cans, spun the rings down, and closed the canner. After the recommended processing time, she hit the pressure relief valve, and the lids “pinged” as they cooled and set up a vacuum. She lifted them out with the jar lifter and set them on the counter to finish cooling while she prepared another batch. When she finished later that afternoon, they had gone through 2 cases of jars. That gave them 5 cases full of vegetables to last the winter. Anne knew they would have enough to last the winter easily. When she had cleaned off the counter, she took some dried moose meat, added some leftover vegetables, and made moose stew for dinner.

Later that evening they ate moose stew for dinner, Anne read her Bible, and Roy studied his Medical Books. After a while they decided it was time for bed, got undressed, and Roy blew out the lantern.

Chapter 38 - Evaluation

The next morning after Breakfast, Roy remembered to check their supply of Ammo. They had 200 rounds of .308 SPBT Match Ammo, 100 rounds of .44 Magnum JHP ammo, and 500 rounds of .22lr CCI Mini-mags. Roy picked up his list, thought for a second, and thought he'd call Bill and see if they could get another 1000 rds of .22lr ammo. He wanted to talk to Anne first, and went into the "kitchen" where she was cleaning up from breakfast. "Anne, I was reviewing our ammo situation, we have enough to make it through the winter, and most of next year if they can't get any more gas, but we only have 500 rounds of .22. I know that's enough for what we need, but that doesn't leave anything for recreational shooting. Would it be OK if I asked Bill to add 1000 rounds of .22lr to the list - it will only weigh 5 pounds."

"Roy, if we have 5 pounds available, instead of ammo - since we have enough, wouldn't it be a better idea to get some more baby stuff?"

"Like what dear?"

"More diapers, or talcum powder, maybe some zinc oxide, heck I don't know. I was planning on having unlimited access to stuff for the baby, now it looks like we are basically on our own."

"Anne, make a prioritized list of what you need for the baby, and the approximate weight of each item. I'll call Bill when you're ready and see if we are under our 500 pound limit."

Anne sat down, and added some items to her list, and estimated the weight of each item. When she was finished, Roy called Bill.

"Bill, it's Roy - do you have our weight total yet?"

"Hi Roy, nice to hear from you - let me get it."

"Roy, your order came up to 450 pounds. Would you like anything else?"

Roy looked at the list, and totaled 50 pounds off the list.

"Bill, hang on a sec, let me ask Anne something."

"Anne, Bill said we can order another 50 pounds. Do you want me to order the first 4 items as written, or do you want me to order the whole list and reduce quantities?"

"Go ahead and order the first 4 items, the rest of the list isn't critical. We already have

plenty of the last 4 items.”

“Bill, Anne said we need 2 dozen more cloth diapers, 1 more 5 pound box of Shock-it, another box of laundry soap, a couple of tubes of zinc oxide, and another case of Baby lotion. That should total 50 pounds.”

“How you set for coffee?”

I’ve got enough - barely.”

“I’ll add 5 pounds of coffee to that list, OK.”

“Thanks Bill, I’ll appreciate that this winter.”

“You guys take care, and you should see Jim in a couple of days.”

“Thanks Bill, see you later.”

“Anne, Bill said we should see Jim later this week, and he ordered all the items for us, and even threw in a 5 pound can of coffee.”

“Roy, that’s great - with the extra stuff we’ll be OK. I’ve never been in a Survival Situation, so I need all the help you can give me as far as prioritizing and organizing everything.”

“Anne, I wouldn’t worry about this situation. We’ve got a huge quantity of supplies as long as we don’t waste anything. The way you shoot - 200 rounds of .308 equals 200 moose or caribou - I doubt we will need that many animals in 20 years.

“Anne - I can’t believe I forgot this - Jim was supposed to be by before winter to blow out our pipes so they don’t freeze.”

Roy, I don’t think it’s as big of a deal - if we disconnect the pumps and take them indoors won’t the pipes drain naturally if the cabin is higher than the lake?”

“Anne, I don’t know what I’d do without you. I know what I’d like to do with you.” He started tickling her. Anne and Roy didn’t get any work done for the rest of the day.

****Two days later****

Roy and Anne rolled out of bed, and Roy got dressed quickly because it was cold in the cabin. Anne got dressed before starting breakfast. Before either of them could do anything else, they heard the roar of a plane. By the time they got organized, Jim was taxiing the plane up to their front door, and shutting down the engine, he couldn’t waste any fuel. Roy

and Anne walked out to meet the plane. Jim handed Roy a manifest showing what was shipped, and told Roy to make sure it's all there, since he has a planeload of stuff, and he didn't pack it personally. They quickly unloaded their 500 pounds of supplies, and Roy checked it off the list, then Jim handed him another box. "Jim, we've got everything on the list, what's this?"

"Bill wanted to surprise you, don't worry I had more than enough room and weight left over. I got to go, so I'll shake your hand, and give Anne a hug. I hope the next time I see you, I'll be a grandpa. Take care Roy, and keep in touch."

"Jim, what are you going to do now that Allakaket doesn't have any fuel?"

"Don't worry about me - several other bush pilots have already offered to keep me busy until we get the fuel situation straightened out."

"OK, take care and I'll see you later." Roy gave Jim a handshake that quickly turned into a "mountain man" hug. Anne walked up, and no words were needed. Jim gave her a big hug, then told her "Take care mommy, hopefully the next time I see you, I can spoil my grandson. God Bless, and take care of Roy for me."

Anne was practically in tears when she said, "Don't worry Uncle Jim, we'll be fine - I've got Jim Bridger here to protect me." They both got a good laugh at that, then Jim got back in the plane, started the engine, turned around and taxied off, then took off as soon as he reached the end of the lake.

Roy wondered what Bill had given them, and as he set the box down on the table, he couldn't contain himself, and opened it. Inside was 5 pounds of Teriyaki seasoning powder, 5 pounds of Sugar, 5 pounds of Tea, and 5 pounds of Coffee. Roy walked over to the radio, and called Bill to thank him.

"Bill, thanks for the extra box - it will come in real handy."

"I kind of figured if you were on your own, you might want some teriyaki seasoning for all the jerky you will need to make. The sugar, tea and coffee were just to make sure you didn't run out. Make it last, I don't know when we'll get another load of fuel."

"Thanks Bill - I'll make sure I do that. Over and out."

Roy helped Anne pack all the supplies, then they did an inventory. They had 8 cases of 1qt canning jars with lids, 6 cases of commercial canned vegetables and other stuff, 5 cases of home canned vegetables, 3 cases of canned moose meat, as well as hundreds of pounds of flour, sugar, salt, lard, baking powder, various seasonings, coffee, canned milk, rice, instant potatoes, beans, and a gunny sack full of potatoes. Anne had a separate area she was storing "baby stuff" in, so he didn't inventory that. He took down his bow saw, and tied the 5 extra

blades to it with a piece of string. He picked up his axes, took them to the table, and sharpened and oiled them, then put them back up. He had a 5-gallon plastic pail full of non-hybrid seeds for next year, and the year after if necessary. He had a box full of wicks and parts for the lanterns. Over in the corner were 10 pieces of PVC pipe left over from his project, and a jar of PVC cement. Roy thought that might come in handy in case some of it was damaged this winter. Roy checked the jerky box, and it was almost full. He took some spare gallon Ziplocs, and sorted the jerky into fish, bear and moose jerky, then put it back in the box. Basically, they were set for the winter. Roy knew he would need a couple more moose or caribou before the winter set in, but even if he didn't, they wouldn't starve. Roy had a brilliant idea while he was standing there - if he could build a sheltered entryway out of the woodpiles, the door shouldn't get snowed in as badly. He walked over to ask Anne "Anne - last year, I almost got stuck in the cabin when the snow drifted the door closed. I had an idea that might prevent it. What if I were to build an alcove in front of the door out of our woodpiles that would shelter the door on both sides and above?"

"Wouldn't that just move the problem away from the cabin door - it would still drift in where the alcove ended. Besides, in order to have 6 feet of cover, the woodpile would have to be 18 feet long and 18 feet wide. I've got a better idea. When we were "snowed in" usually what happened was the door froze in place due to the warm air melting the snow and freezing between the door and the jam. What we did was use a thin saw blade to cut the ice away from the door, then all we had to do was push the door open against the weight of the snow."

"You're right Anne, I never thought of it, but that had to be what was happening. One time I had to cut the door free using my Bowie knife. A saw blade would be 1/3 as thick, so it would be much easier. Not only that, but if I used some heat, the ice would melt as well. Thanks Dear."

Roy remembered something, "Anne, we have 8 cases of jars and lids left, how many cases do we need to can a moose or caribou?"

"It takes between 1 and 2 cases of 50 quart jars to properly can a large moose or caribou, but if you make jerky and sausage, we can use 1 case per animal."

"We've got 5 cases of jars available. If we process 1 case per week, that will give us an additional 5 cases full of canned meat for the winter. We're done with the garden, and I can smoke and jerk any fish we catch, so we can add up to another 5 cases of meat."

"Great Roy, why don't we go hunting tomorrow, then once a week for the next 5 weeks to fill all the jars. That way - we'll have food to last the winter, spring, and into the summer next year. If for some reason you can't hunt next spring or summer, we don't have to worry about running out of food."

As soon as Anne said that, Roy took out their packs and inventoried their gear, sharpened their knives, and got ready to hunt at first light tomorrow. Anne made dinner as soon as it got dark, and they were in bed shortly after dinner so they could get up at first light.

Chapter 39 - Hunting for Dinner

First thing the next morning, Anne and Roy got up and dressed. They checked the cabin to make sure the fires were out, and quickly donned their gear. Roy opened the door and grabbed the cart, and whistled for Oliver. When he turned around, Oliver and family were standing there like “What are you waiting for - we’re burning daylight.”

Roy thought to himself “Either that wolf is psychic, or the world’s biggest mooch.” When he walked around the front, he said “Guess who’s coming with us again?”

“Let me guess - the Big Bad Wolf and the 3 Little Pigs?”

“Actually, it’s The Big Bad Wolves and the 4 Little Pigs.”

“Roy, I don’t mind the company, but are you sure it’s OK to be feeding the wolves?”

“It’s not like we’re tourists in Yellowstone, Oliver is already habituated to humans, and Francine and the pups have adopted us as their surrogate Alpha pair. Besides, they are also hunting on their own, or they’d be starving - the pups are fully weaned now. I’m just helping them fatten up for the winter. I want all 4 pups to survive, so they have a better chance of having a successful litter next spring. Do you know how hard it is to establish a resident wolf pack in this area? I haven’t seen any signs of other wolves for miles around. Besides, a resident wolf pack will help keep the small rodent population down, since that is their main prey. Wolves rarely attack a moose or caribou unless they are trapped in snow and can’t escape. Basically, despite what some people say, a truly wild wolf population is no threat or competition to us. If we were raising sheep or cattle, that would be a different story, but since we’re Hunter/gatherers, they can safely co-exist with us.”

“Roy, you know what I love about you - I ask a simple question and get a Doctoral Dissertation.” {laughing}

“Well, you DID ask. Anyway, we need to get the show on the road.” Roy picked up the cart and made sure the straps were on it, then carried it around front. He didn’t bother with the compass since he knew his way by heart now. Roy led with the cart, Anne walked next to him with the rifle slung over her shoulder, and the wolves trotted along behind, pausing to investigate interesting sights and smells. With Oliver along, Roy felt comfortable setting a fast pace, and made their campground hours before dark. This time, he packed his tarp and both Mylar blankets since it was getting colder at night. This tarp was actually what was known as a “Sportsman’s blanket” and the inside was laminated with Mylar, and would keep him extra warm acting as a reflector for the fire. While Roy constructed a lean-to and a reflector fire, Anne caught several brook trout, enough for everyone, even the wolves. By the time she came back, Roy had the fire going, and the tarp set up. She quickly cleaned the

fish, threaded them on the sticks Roy had reserved for them, and fed the Wolves the extra fish and all the fish guts. When the fish was cooked, Roy and Anne ate what they wanted, and gave the scraps and bones to the wolves. When they were done eating, Anne quickly refilled the Camelbacks and their canteens with her Katadyn Voyager filter. When it got dark, they cuddled under the blankets and went to sleep.

The next morning, they were up at first light. After he took care of the call of nature, Roy checked the fire was out, took down the tarp, and quickly repacked everything. Anne tossed Roy a tube of Purell, and he washed his hands quickly, then handed Anne a piece of jerky for the trail. Roy walked over to the cart, and picking it up, got moving quickly in the direction of the moose hollow. Later that afternoon, they reached the hollow, and all the moose were gone. Roy hoped it was late enough in the season for the caribou to be in their spot. Anne looked a little alarmed, then realized that the moose should be moving to another area since it was fall already. They shared a look, and finally started laughing realizing how silly they were. Roy shrugged, picked up the cart, and pressed on. A couple of hours later, they walked into a stand of aspen, and Oliver alerted, so they knew the Caribou were back. Roy set down the cart as quietly as possible, while Anne unslung the rifle. Roy kept the wolves quiet while Anne cycled the bolt to chamber a live round and extended the bipod since there weren't any downed logs around to use as a rest. Anne and Roy crept forward until they had a clear view of the clearing. It was full of caribou. Anne and Roy quickly conferred, and decided to shoot 4 caribou now while they had a chance, and give one to the wolves. They would only cart the skin and meat back with them, and would camp here until they were ready to move again. Since Anne had 5 shots in the magazine, she was certain they could easily harvest 4 caribou since they were all within 200 yards of the edge of the clearing. They selected 4 of the biggest animals, making sure to not shoot obviously pregnant cows or the prime bull. When Anne was ready, Roy laid a tarp quietly on the ground, and Anne laid down, adjusted the bipod and her prone position so she was looking right at the first caribou they were going to shoot. She remembered it was easier to traverse left than right for a right-handed shooter, so put the scope on the right-most caribou they wanted. When she had her sight picture and was "in the zone" she quietly cleared the safety, and took aim on the neck of the first bull. As she steadied up, she held her breath, then squeezed the trigger. Roy remembered to stick his fingers in his ears just in time - the noise from the side of the muzzle brake was awesome. As the gun roared, one caribou dropped, and Anne was a blur of motion cycling the action and sighting on the next animal. 3 seconds later, all 4 caribou were on the ground. To say Roy was impressed was an understatement. It would take him that long just to shoot 2 caribou. Anne unloaded and safed the rifle, then went back for their stuff. As they walked into the clearing, the herd stampeded. Anne selected the caribou to give to the wolves, and Roy skinned it first. As soon as he skinned it, he removed the head so he could brain tan the skin, then gutted the animal and left it for the wolves. As soon as Roy left, the wolves descended on it, and were soon pigging out. Meanwhile, Anne had started on the first caribou, and Roy started on the other. They first skinned and gutted all 3 caribou to allow the meat to cool, then Roy took the skins to a nearby stream to clean them off, then cracked the skulls to brain tan the skins. While he

tanned the skins, Anne was well into quartering the first caribou, setting the good meat in a plastic trash bag to keep the flies off. Anne left the guts and edible meat they weren't taking in a pile for the wolves. She kept everything they could use, either to can, jerk or make sausage, but there were some parts of the caribou that were edible, but there was NO way she was eating them. When Roy finished brain tanning the hides, he rolled them up and placed them on the cart. Noticing it was getting dark, Roy found a suitable spot to camp for the night, upwind of the carcasses that were beginning to smell from all the blood and gore. He set up the Sportsman's blanket again as a tarp and reflector, built a reflector fire, and had it going as Anne finished the second Caribou. Roy decided to help her butcher the third caribou since Anne was visibly getting tired of the hard work. Roy quickly sectioned the meat, then started butchering it. Anne took a choice cut of meat over to the fire, and started broiling in on a stick. When he was finished, Roy put the meat in the same garbage bag that Anne used - it was full by now. Roy hoped the wolves were hungry - there was enough stuff laying around to feed several packs of wolves. Roy looked over, and Oliver and family had just about finished the first carcass, and were starting on the second one. Roy figured by tomorrow they would be so stuffed they couldn't move. Roy and Anne rolled into the blankets as it got full dark, and were soon fast asleep.

The next morning, Roy woke up, and looked around for Oliver and family. Oliver was as full as Roy had ever seen him, and even Francine had made a total pig of herself. The pups were so gorged that Roy was sure none of them would be able to move today.

When Anne awoke, Roy asked her if they should stay there today with the wolves, or make their own way home. Anne was sure they couldn't move today, and wasn't too sure about their being able to travel tomorrow. Since they didn't keep the whole carcass, they were fairly lightly loaded, and could easily make it to their campsite.

"Roy, I don't really know what to do, on one hand, if we stayed, we might have to spend 2 days here until the wolves could travel, and we could easily make it home in that period, on the other hand, it would be nice to have the wolves along for security."

"Anne, I think the wolves will be fine here by themselves, and the only thing we need to worry about on the way home is bears. We're just as much at risk with the wolves as without - except they might give us some warning - they're certainly in no condition to fight off a bear."

Roy walked over to Oliver and sat next to him. "Old friend, I don't know if you can understand what I'm saying, but if you can, I need your help. If we stay here for 2 days with you, all this meat we got may spoil. If we leave, we might leave you vulnerable to a Bear or other large predator. I don't know what to do." Roy stroked Oliver's fur, and all of a sudden, Oliver sat up and looked toward the Cabin, then looked like he was smiling. Roy felt deep within his Spirit that it would be OK to leave the wolves alone, and they would catch up when they could. He patted Oliver for a while longer, then turned and walked over

to Anne.

“I don’t know how I know; I just felt a sense of peace after talking to Oliver. I’m sure they will be OK, and will join us as soon as they can travel.”

“Roy, that was the weirdest thing, while you were petting Oliver, I was petting Francine, and I got the same feeling. They’re in their natural environment, and we need to get back to our house where we’re safe.”

“Well, that settles it.” Roy picked up their tarp, repacked their gear, and put on their backpacks, fanny packs, and shoulder holsters. When they were ready to go, Roy said goodbye to Oliver quickly, picked up the handles of the cart, and slipped into the shoulder straps, then turned around so he would be pulling the cart, and picked up the handles. As they walked away, Oliver and his family walked with them to the grove of Aspens, where they bedded down to digest their meal. Roy kept walking, but had tears in his eyes. He felt like he was deserting his best friend. Roy got over the feeling after they were out of sight, and he made good time over the flat ground after they crested the small hill. After they crested another small hill later that afternoon, they made their campground just before dark. Roy quickly made camp while Anne caught a couple of brook trout. He had a fire going by the time she came back, and they quickly cleaned the fish, then stuck them on sticks to roast over the fire. When they were finished eating, Roy said a quick prayer for Oliver and his family, then curled up with Anne under the Mylar blanket.

The next morning, when they awoke, they saw Oliver and family walking up the path to them. It seemed that laying were they were instead of forcing themselves to walk when full gave them the time to digest their huge meals, since they weren’t as bloated as yesterday. When they approached the camp, Oliver walked up to Roy, who hugged the stuffing out of him. Oliver must have thought that humans were strange, since he had just seen him the day before. With the reunion out of the way, they broke camp, and got on the trail home again. By nightfall, they were home, and the wolves continued on to their den.

Right after breakfast the next morning, Roy and Anne got busy canning and smoking the meat. By dinnertime, they had processed 2 cases of caribou, and Roy had smoked 1/3 of the meat while Anne was busy making sausage out of the less choice cuts and the fat. Roy hung the teriyaki flavored caribou meat and the sausage in the smokehouse while Anne finished cleaning up from canning. Roy felt like celebrating, so they opened 2 cans of Spaghetti-O’s and ate that for dinner. When Roy said grace that evening, he was especially thankful for the caribou and for Oliver and family’s safe return. Anne didn’t understand the tears in his eyes, but decided not to ask. After dinner, they read their Bibles before going to bed exhausted. The next morning after breakfast, Roy told Anne he was ready to take a week off from hunting. Anne said he could either resume his studies, or go fishing. Roy thought about it, and decided to study all morning, and go fishing in the afternoon for dinner, since the smokehouse was full. He told Anne what he thought, and she thought it was a wise decision.

Roy broke out the books, and quickly got to work. By the time the afternoon came around, he was ready for a break. They quickly donned their shoulder holsters and fanny packs, then Anne got the fishing gear, and they walked hand in hand to the lake. As they were walking north, Roy worried about running into a bear, but luckily they were elsewhere, or else word had gotten through the Bear Grapevine to stay away from that guy who did the bad Clint Eastwood impressions. Either way, they had a relaxing afternoon fishing, and called it quits when they had 2 large lake trout. They walked back to the cabin, where Anne cleaned the fish, then breaded and fried them. She made a pot of instant mashed potatoes and a can of vegetables. Roy said grace before dinner, and they ate dinner quietly. Roy paused and reflected between bites how his life had turned out. He had loved Susan, had two sons by her, and a happy life until she died. Then he spent almost a year on his own with only a wolf for company. Suddenly he remembered a famous quote. "Dog is the Mirror Image of the Name of God because he mirrors God's love to his creation." Roy couldn't hold back anymore, and started crying right in the middle of dinner. Alarmed, Anne walked over to Roy, held him and asked him, "What's Wrong?" Finally, when he stopped crying, he explained why he was crying, and started crying all over again. Roy had always loved dogs, but didn't always have a dog in his life. He related to Anne how he had several dogs through his life, and it was always right when he needed a friend, like the day his Dad died. And he found Oliver at the low point of his life, right when he needed a friend. It was as if God had sent a furry angel down to minister to him. Anne held Roy close, she never realized he was such a softie. He was a walking contradiction. He was as tough as a Grizzly Bear, but as gentle as a Lamb. Anne realized just how much she really loved Roy right then and there. She knew as long as he was around, she would be as safe and protected, and loved as deeply as Ron had loved and cared for her. She didn't have to be scared anymore, she knew Roy would rather stick a knife in his chest than break her heart. Anne quickly dissolved into tears right along side Roy. When they dried their eyes, they knew they had each found someone special. Roy helped Anne to quickly clean up after dinner, then instead of reading their bibles, they went to bed early and cuddled until they fell asleep.

Chapter 40 - Chores

The next morning after Breakfast, Roy went outside to check things out. That's when he noticed the 8 logs sitting next to the sawhorse that needed to be cut into firewood lengths. Roy walked back into the cabin, told Anne what he was doing, and grabbed the bow saw and blades, then walked outside, set the first log in the sawhorse, and sawed it into 1 foot lengths so it would fit in the cook stove. It took him most of the morning and afternoon just to saw the wood, then he still needed to split it. Roy decided he might as well get it over with, and traded the bow saw for the splitting maul. Swinging that heavy maul after sawing all day was more work than he was used to - that gas powered saw was a real work saver, and now he realized how much work it saved him. By the time he was finished around dinnertime, he was exhausted. Anne came out to check on him, and made him drink a quart of water, which he drank quickly - the cold water tasted good. Anne went inside and poured another quart, which Roy also drank, all though not as quickly. Roy sat on a stump to catch his breath, and cool off. Half an hour later, Anne came out to tell him dinner was ready, and she helped him into the house. Roy walked back to the kitchen sink to wash his hands before dinner, then sat down to eat. He said a quick grace, and was glad Anne made a large dinner, because he was HUNGRY.. He ate seconds of everything, and drank another large glass of water. Roy got real sleepy after dinner, so they went to bed early.

Roy woke up the next morning stiff and sore, so Anne got him a glass of water and some Advil. After the Advil and a massage, he felt much better. Anne got up to make breakfast while Roy got dressed in his buckskins. After breakfast, Roy remembered he needed to rinse the caribou skins that had been drying on the smokehouse roof. Anne decided to go with him, and donned her gear, and grabbed the fishing tackle since they were going to the lake anyway. Roy donned his gear too, and grabbed the skins off the roof of the smokehouse and set them on the cart. When they were ready, Roy wheeled the cart to the lake to rinse the skins off, and clean them. He set the cleaned skins on his old drying rack, and lit a small fire to help them dry. They walked north to their fishing spot, keeping an eye out for bears. Roy was amazed that he hadn't seen any bears this fall - maybe the word really got out after all. Anne baited the hook, then cast out into the lake. Half an hour later, she had a nice lake trout on the stringer, then she cast again. It took longer this time, and the fish was smaller. Roy commented that the fish might be migrating to a more freeze resistant part of the lake for the winter. They both noticed how cold it was getting in the afternoon, and Roy told Anne that if they wanted any more Caribou they had better go tomorrow. Anne agreed, and they hurried back to the cabin since they weren't dressed for how cold it had gotten. Roy quickly retrieved the skins, rolled them up and stuck them on the cart. They walked briskly back to the cabin to keep warm. Roy unrolled the skins when he got back and set them on the roof of the smokehouse to dry. Roy checked inside the smokehouse, re-arranged the meat, and lit another fire. He closed the door, and walked into the cabin. Anne had gutted and filleted the fish by the time Roy got back inside. They decided to eat dinner early, so Anne took the freshly cleaned fish and breaded it to prepare it for frying. Roy went through

all their gear, and unpacked their heavier jackets. He didn't think they would need their parkas, but he did pack their medium weight waterproof hooded jackets, gloves, and warmer socks. He decided that they should wear their waterproof boots with their medium thickness wool socks. They had heavier socks and insulated pack boots for walking around in the snow, so Roy thought that they would be warm enough. Roy decided that he would have to relegate his Apache style caribou skin boots to indoor wear for the rest of the season. Roy cleaned and sharpened their knives, checked their ammo, reloaded the rifle, and put another box of .308 SPBT ammo in his backpack. Both .44 Magnums hadn't been shot, but Roy still inspected them and the 22/45 pistols thoroughly. When he was finished, he replaced them in the shoulder holsters right as Anne finished dinner. Roy washed his hands and set the table for dinner. Roy said grace, then they ate dinner. Roy was noticing he was hungry by the time dinner rolled around, and realized without all his "modern conveniences" he was working a lot harder. They went to bed early so they would be up and moving at daylight.

Chapter 41 - Last Chance Hunt?

As soon as the sun was up, Roy and Anne were up and getting dressed. They quickly checked the cabin to make sure the fires were out, then donned their shoulder harnesses, fanny packs, and backpacks that Anne had filled with water the night before. Since it was cold out, they both were wearing their jackets, gloves, and boots with polypro liners and wool hiking socks. Roy had packed several spare pairs so they would have clean socks. Anne grabbed the Browning A-bolt, and checked that the magazine was full, and locked the action with the safety lever, then slung it over her shoulder. Roy walked out, grabbed the cart, and made sure the straps were on it. They were in a hurry, so he didn't bother whistling for Oliver. He rounded the cabin, and met up with Anne. She said "What no escort this time?"

"They might show up later - let's go, we're burning daylight."

Roy handed Anne a piece of Teriyaki Bear jerky. Anne was glad Roy had used the Teriyaki seasoning, or she might have decided to go hungry. As they walked along, they noticed the deciduous trees were starting to change color - They knew winter wasn't far away now. Roy walked at as rapid of a pace that Anne could safely maintain for the distance they had to go today. Roy wanted to be at his campground with a couple of hours left of daylight. By late afternoon, they arrived at the campground. Roy quickly set up their shelter, and made a fire while Anne caught a couple of fish. She was amazed the Brook trout were still hanging around this late in the season. Roy collected a large pile of wood, and had a roaring fire going by the time Anne got back. While she cleaned the fish, Roy made some improvements to their campground. He used another tarp as a groundsheet, planned on sleeping wrapped up in Mylar blankets again. Since Oliver wasn't there, he wanted to keep the fire going all night if possible. He realized it would die out while they slept, but any fire might keep predators away. Anne stuck the fish on sticks, and started broiling the fish. When they were done, Roy said a quick grace, and ate his fish. When they finished, they burned the remainder of the fish so they wouldn't leave any fishy scent to attract anything to their camp. Roy remembered the best way to avoid problems was to keep a clean camp, and just to make sure, he would sleep with his Anaconda next to him, and also his Surefire P3 flashlight. That had to be one of the brightest flashlights he had seen for its size. He didn't have a lot of batteries for it, so he just used it for emergencies, or to light targets at night, using the Harries Technique. When they were done eating, they rolled into their blankets, said "goodnight" and quickly fell to sleep.

The next morning, Roy was awake at first light. He quickly looked around, but didn't see anything. He woke Anne, then walked behind a large tree to take care of his full bladder. As soon as he was back, Anne picked another tree, and was back by the time Roy had packed up the tarps and put out the fire. She refilled their Camelbacks and canteens using the Katadyn Voyager, then tossed Roy the tube of Purell to wash his hands. When they had

both washed their hands, they donned all their gear and Roy handed Anne another piece of jerky, then picked up the cart, and headed off. They quickly reached the Moose Hollow, and it was deserted like last time. They pushed on, and by later that afternoon, were at the stand of Aspens that marked the edge of the Caribou's feeding grounds. Roy quietly dropped the cart and his backpack. Anne dropped her backpack next to Roy's, unslung the rifle, and released the safety. Since the chamber was empty, now was a good time to eliminate one source of noise. They crept up to where the edge of the stand was, and the clearing was full of Caribou. Anne and Roy had already decided to shoot 3 caribou, and skin and quarter them there. They would have to stay overnight, but it was an acceptable risk for all the meat they could carry in one trip if they did it that way. 3 Caribou would just about use up the rest of their canning jars.

Roy quietly unfolded the tarp, and Anne unfolded the bipod legs, then laid prone, got a good shooting position, and selecting 3 larger bulls, aimed at the one furthest to the right. She steadied her breathing, then cycled the action, got a good sight picture, then as the crosshairs settled on the neck of the first bull, gently squeezed the trigger. As soon as the gun went off, she was cycling the bolt and ready for her next shot. Before the smoke had cleared, 3 bulls were down and not moving. Anne put the safety back on, and Roy tried to get the ringing in his ears to stop. Seems he forgot to plug his ears. They walked back to their gear, and as they broke cover, the herd of Caribou stampeded again. Roy couldn't figure Caribou, whenever he shot deer, the entire herd was off to the races at the first shot. Maybe since this herd hadn't been hunted for years, they weren't too hunter savvy. They walked up to the three bulls, and Roy wasn't surprised to see they were all shot through the neck. Either Anne was a markswoman, sniper, or a show-off. Right now Roy didn't think it would be a good idea to ask since she was armed. Roy thought that having a wife that shot better than you was a novel way to avoid Divorce Court.

He started skinning and gutting the first bull as Anne started on the next. Since the wolves weren't with them, they could each skin and gut a bull without having to hurry so the wolves could eat. Once his bull was skinned and gutted, Roy started working on the skin, took it to the nearby stream to wash it off, then cracked the bull's skull to brain tan the hide. When he was finished, Anne was ready for him to brain tan the other hide, so Roy obliged. Anne had once admitted that Brain tanning was about the grossest thing she ever had to do. Roy didn't have too many problems with it, and told Anne it was like playing in the mud, expect for the smell. Anne gladly let Roy brain tan all the hides he wanted to. By the time he was finished, she had started skinning and gutting the third bull. A few minutes later, she handed him the hide, which he washed then cracked the skull. When he finished, Anne told him to go to the stream and clean up, he smelled. Roy washed up, and cleaned his knives, then went back to the first bull, and started butchering it. Anne had a trash bag to put the meat into, so Roy helped her fill it. They both finished their bulls about the same time, so Roy started on the third bull while Anne washed up, she was covered with blood and gore up to the elbows.

When she was finished, Roy asked her if she'd rather butcher the bull or set up camp. Anne told Roy he could set up camp and drag all the wood over to the fire ring. With that settled, Roy got up, walked over to their old fire ring, and set both their backpacks down. He spent the next hour gathering wood, and setting up the Sportsman's Blanket and the ground sheet. When he had a big enough pile of wood, he started a nice roaring fire. Anne finished butchering the bull, and selected a couple of choice cuts of meat to broil over the fire. While she skewered the meat, Roy wheeled the cart with the meat and skins downwind of their camp in the smoke plume of their fire to keep the bugs off, and diffuse the smell of the meat. He walked back over to where Anne was, took out their canteen cups, and made tea while the meat was cooking. When the meat was done, Roy said grace, then they both ate their meat. Anne said, "I wonder where Oliver and Francine are - they never missed a free meal?" Roy was wondering too, but thought that they were probably hunting as well, since the pups were old enough to hunt now, and told Anne what he thought. She agreed that they might be hunting themselves. When they finished dinner, Roy put up everything, and they rolled into their blankets and were fast asleep. Roy woke up several times that evening and thought he heard something, but it wasn't close enough to worry about, so he went back to sleep.

They broke camp at first light, and made it back to their overnight camp with daylight to spare. It was too late to try to make it home, so Roy decided to stay overnight. They scouted the area around them, and didn't see any bear tracks while Roy was gathering wood, so they knew it was relatively safe there. Anne caught several brook trout, but they were smaller than the ones that she had caught the other day. She had caught enough for the two of them, but there was no way she could have fed the wolves as well, so she was glad that she didn't have to. By the time she had cleaned the fish, Roy had the tarp and groundsheet up, and the fire going. He helped her skewer the fish, and they ate them as soon as they were done. Again, Roy burned the leftovers in the fire, then they turned in. Roy slept peacefully, and they woke at first light, took care of business, then quickly broke camp and headed home. 4 hours later, they saw their cabin. Anne was glad to be home, sleeping on the ground was not fun for a pregnant woman. Roy checked things out, and nothing had been disturbed, although there were some strangely familiar wolf tracks around. Roy thought "Well Oliver, you snooze, you loose." Roy pointed out the tracks, and Anne agreed they looked like Oliver's tracks.

Roy carried the meat into the cabin, and they put their stuff up. He went outside to unload the smokehouse, and bagged all the dried moose and caribou meat, then carried it back into the house and put it in his jerky box. He asked Anne what to do with the sausage, and Anne told him that it should be done by now, but they needed to hang, so they could leave them there until she thought of a way to hang them out of the way. Meanwhile, Anne got out her canning supplies, and got started while Roy started cutting up the caribou meat into quart-sized chunks. They had it down to a science by now, and by the time Anne had the canner ready to go, Roy had enough jars filled to do one batch, and was starting on the next. Anne canned the first batch and Roy kept cutting meat. With them both working, they quickly filled and canned all the jars they had left, with some meat left over. Anne set up her meat

grinder, and ground the caribou meat and fat into sausage, added the cure, then ground it again to mix it, then took the grinder attachment off, and put on the sausage tube, and took the remaining casings out of the water, threaded them onto the sausage maker, and kept the hopper fed with ground caribou meat as she turned the crank to make sausage. Every six inches, she twisted the casing to make a link, then when she had a dozen links, cut the casing, tied a knot, and dropped it into boiling water for a minute, then hung it to dry.

By the end of the day, Anne was pretty sure if she saw another Caribou it would be too soon. Roy was amazed at the amount of meat they got out of 3 caribou bulls. They had 3 cases of Caribou meat canned, and about 3 dozen sausage links, plus some meat Roy wanted to make jerky out of, but it was much less than he did before, since the “jerky box” was pretty full. Roy saw that Anne was Dog Tired, and volunteered to make dinner. By now, Anne was glad to take a break, and sat down. Roy opened 2 cans of Corned Beef Hash, and got the cast iron skillet hot, then cooked both cans. He took a cup of powdered eggs, added water to it, and mixed thoroughly. When the hash was done, Roy added the egg mixture to it, and cooked it thoroughly. When it was done, Roy got out two plates, and divided it up. He carried the plates to the table, and Anne looked at him kind of funny until he said, “I know Corned Beef Hash is usually Breakfast food, but I felt like making it for dinner.” Anne had no objections, she was too tired to care. Roy noticed the pregnancy was taking a lot out of her, and resolved to do more around the house from now on. Luckily, most of the heavy work was done since they were basically done hunting for the winter, and had plenty of food left. Roy said Grace, tasted his food, and decided it needed salt and pepper. Anne tasted hers, and agreed. Later, Roy cleaned up after them, and sat down to read for a while. Anne announced she was tired and going to bed, so he put his medical books up and joined her. After she got into bed, he blew the lantern out, and said goodnight. Anne slept like she hadn’t slept in a week in her nice comfortable bed.

Chapter 42 - Decisions

Roy got up and made breakfast for Anne since she wasn't feeling too hot - Roy thought it might be morning sickness, but didn't want to ask. After breakfast, Roy was sitting around thinking when he had a brainstorm. "Anne, I've got over 20 gallons of gas left, and the only thing I can use it in is the chainsaw. I highly doubt we can store that much fuel over the winter, and I know you don't want gas in the house. Instead of chancing it going bad, I think I should use it to fell some more trees and saw them into usable lengths. I nearly killed myself the other day trying to saw that log into the right lengths. If I use half the fuel to fell and de-limb the trees, then the other half to cut them to length, I can make sure I have enough fuel to finish the job. I feel we have less than a month left before the snow flies. If you remember, once the snow starts around here, that's just about it for outdoor stuff. Speaking of which, we need to get set up for the winter here. I need to fill up all those water jugs we have, and set up the curtain for the commode, as well as string the clothesline so we can dry clothes inside. Is it OK with you if I stack wood indoors for the fireplace? Since the Jerky Box is gone, I can use the spot it occupied to stack split firewood for the fireplace."

"Roy, that's an excellent Idea - Just be extra careful with the chainsaw since they are using Jim's plane for emergencies only, and it's not based in Allakaket any more - that can add an hour to the trip here alone. I don't want another tree to fall on you. I'll help you with the indoor stuff, but it might take me a while in my condition (rubbing her swollen tummy)."

"Anne, I thought of something you can do - How do you like sewing?"

"Roy, please tell me you're not turning into a Male Chauvinist Pig."

"No Way Anne - I plan on letting you wear shoes at least." Roy ducked just in case, but Anne couldn't find anything to throw. "Seriously, we have 6 caribou skins, and if you don't mind sewing, you could make some buckskin clothes like I did last year. It would give you something to do, to take your mind off being uncomfortable."

"How do you know I'm uncomfortable?"

"I've never seen you fidget so much before, and I can tell that some things are getting difficult. I promise I'll help whenever you need me - after all, you're carrying our son."

"I guess it's kind of hard to hide. I didn't know that being pregnant was that big of a deal, but I can barely see my feet, and I'm pretty sure I don't want to see my ankles."

"Anne, you are so beautiful right now - you almost seem to glow. I remember when Susan was pregnant with our first son. She was a much smaller woman than you, and by the time she was due, she looked like she had a basketball under her maternity top, but her face

glowed.'

"Ok, Roy, that sounds like an idea. Since my shape is changing from week to week, I'll just make myself a long ankle length gown with a lace-up bodice so I can nurse. I can just use your existing buckskins as a pattern for your clothes, and cut to match."

"Anne, just make sure to leave a ½" on every seam edge, since caribou hides don't fold easily, you need to make a bigger seam."

"Anything else I need to know?"

"I'll tell you later, I used a thick piece of hide to push the needles through, but you probably have something better in your sewing kit." Roy gave Anne a kiss, and walked outside to check on things. He had plenty of room on the leeward side of the porch, he had to make sure to leave room to get to the outhouse, but between the room he had on the leeward side of the cabin, and the leeward side of the porch, he had enough room for a sizeable quantity of firewood. Roy had an idea, but first he had to check a few things out. He walked over to his gas cans, verified that he had over 20 gallons, plus the oil he needed to mix with it, and it all still smelled fresh. Roy walked back into the cabin, and took down the case with the chainsaw, and when he opened it, noticed the teeth were starting to get worn. "About Time" he thought - if he remembered correctly, this was the first time the teeth needed sharpening. The manufacturer had packed a sharpening kit which included a jig that mounted to the bar to set the filing angle, and a set of diamond encrusted hones. Roy was puzzled that they didn't just include a file, but it might have to do with the fact that this was the first time it needed sharpening. Roy took out the instructions, and started reading the sharpening instructions. The Diamond hones made sense when he read that the teeth were treated with Titanium Nitride to increase wear resistance. He knew from his knives that TiN was one of the hardest materials to sharpen. Roy hoped they didn't make the teeth out of D-2, or this could take a while. Luckily for Roy, chainsaw teeth were made out of a different metal, and after he got the hang of it, sharpening the saw didn't take as long as he thought.

When he finished, he told Anne he was going out to saw some wood, put on his fanny pack and safety gear, then slid on his shoulder holster. He realized that was overkill, but until the snow started falling and the bears were hibernating, he didn't want to be outside without a gun. Anne tried not to laugh at his appearance, then realized that Roy was dressed like he was going into a nuclear hot zone because he WAS a safety freak. That made Anne feel better, even if her belly hurt from all the giggling she was doing. Roy went outside, grabbed the dolly, the harness and the chains, and dragged them a ways away from the house to a stand of 8 inch Aspens that were the right size for firewood. He wanted to reserve the rest of the wood around his house for a windbreak and an emergency supply of wood. He realized that the longer they stayed here, the further he'd have to travel for firewood, and decided to leave the rest of the wood near the cabin alone. He was about 100 yards away from the house, which was close enough to drag 8 inch logs, so Roy was glad he didn't have to cut

down some “Old Timers”. He walked back to the cabin, picked up the saw, filled it full of gas/oil and carried it to the stand of trees. Since he had previously been felling trees in this area, the brush was already cleared out, so all Roy had to do was get ready, plan a sequence to drop the trees in, and go to work. He set the chainsaw on the ground, primed the carburetor, and pulled the starter cord. After a few pulls, the engine started, and Roy let it warm up while he checked his safety gear, then dropped his visor. Once he picked up the saw, he wasted no time felling all the trees in the stand. He ran out of gas and daylight about the same time, so he left the wood and the dollies where they were, and walked back to the cabin. Anne had dinner and a big hug ready when he walked in the door. Roy left the chainsaw on the porch to cool off, and was busy taking off his grimy gear when Anne practically tackled him as he walked through the door. “Anne, what gives?”

“Roy, I’m so glad to see you. I was worried about you all afternoon.”

“I was just in the next clearing, if you were worried, why didn’t you walk over to see me?”

“I didn’t want to get anywhere near that chainsaw - they scare me to death.”

“By any chance did you see the Texas Chainsaw Massacre when you were living in Dallas? Anne - that’s Hollywood. A chainsaw is actually safer than most power tools when used right.”

“Anyway, dinner’s ready, so wash up.”

Roy walked into the kitchen, and cleaned up as best as he could until after dinner, then joined Anne at the dinner table. Anne took the rare opportunity to say Grace. “Dear Lord, thanks for the food, and thanks for giving my husband back to me. - Amen.”

Throughout dinner, Roy had the feeling Anne wasn’t telling him everything. After dinner was cleared, he took the chance to really clean off the grime. The water in the sink was dirty enough to grow potatoes in. When he finished, Roy washed his clothes and hung them on the clothesline he set up in the second room. Anne was already lying in bed when he came back, so he blew out the lantern and climbed into bed next to her. The next thing he knew, Anne was holding on to him like a Python, and crying. Roy, being a man, didn’t have a clue what was going on, so he held onto Anne until she stopped crying. When she finally stopped crying, she told Roy what was wrong. “I’ve never been so scared in my life - I was imagining all kinds of things. The worst was that I was about to become a Young Widow with a fatherless son.”

Roy had an idea what was bothering Anne, and a solution, then he remembered that Women didn’t always want you to solve their problems, so he just held her. They continued cuddling until she fell asleep in his arms. Roy felt the baby stir, and he almost started crying. Eventually they both fell asleep.

Chapter 43 - Making Firewood

The next morning Anne made Roy all his favorite foods for breakfast. When they were finished eating, Roy told her he still had to cut all that wood into firebox length, and it would be faster and safer if he used the chainsaw. He'd be right outside this time. Anne gave Roy a big hug and told him not to worry, she'd be fine. She had a dream last night and she saw Ron who told her that everything was going to be OK, and Roy was there to keep her safe and love her and protect her like Ron had. Roy looked at Anne kind of funny then realized she wasn't kidding. He thought he was the only one that got those kind of dreams. Anne gave Roy a kiss and told him she'd be all right from now on, and turned to clean up the dishes from breakfast. Roy could see the changes in Anne, and saw it was harder for her to move around. He picked up his plate and helped her do the dishes, then wrapped his arms around her waist and held her from behind. As they were holding each other, Roy felt the baby move with his hands. He reached down and kissed Anne's neck. He whispered into her ear "Anne I love you so much." gave her another kiss, and a playful pat. Then he picked up his safety gear, set it on the porch next to the saw, then grabbed his shoulder holster and fanny pack. Anne gave him a big glass of water. Remembering how dehydrated he got last time, he drank it down, and soon had to visit the outhouse. With that out of the way, he walked to where the logs were sitting, and rolled them 3 at a time onto the dolly, chained them into place, and shouldered the straps and dragged the logs back to the cabin. He made at least 5 more trips before he had all the wood stacked next to the cabin. He decided to get another glass of water, walked inside, told Anne he would be just outside the cabin for the rest of the afternoon, grabbed a drink of water, and walked back outside. He noticed Anne was working on the Caribou skins. He was glad she was doing something to take her mind off the discomfort of being pregnant. Roy walked outside and was just about ready to start cutting wood, when he looked up and saw Oliver staggering into the clearing, his shoulder and paw were torn up, and he looked like he was in a fight. Roy hoped the other guy got it worse than Oliver. Quickly he ducked back into the cabin, told Anne "Oliver's Hurt Bad - clear off the table and get the trauma kit." then he ran out and heedless of his own safety, scooped up Oliver and picked him up. Roy doubted Oliver was capable of attacking him, since it looked like he was bleeding from a shoulder wound, and his front paws were torn. Roy carried Oliver inside, and Anne had cleared the table off, lit their biggest lantern, and had the Trauma kit handy by the time Roy set Oliver gently on the table. Anne was worried that she couldn't save Oliver, but Roy pleaded "Anne - we have to try. He's saved my life more than once."

That shocked her out of her lethargy. She'd never worked on dogs before, but remembered stuff she'd picked up from Ron, who used to doctor their dogs. She took out a pack of Ringer's Lactate and an IV kit, and quickly located a vein in his foreleg and started an IV. Anne didn't want to try anything else, since she was sure that all the human solutions wouldn't work, or might kill him. As soon as she had the IV in, she taped it in place, then set it wide open to get the fluid into Oliver as fast as possible. She then stopped the bleeding

as best as possible. Most of the damage was surface cuts which she closed with sutures. Oliver's shoulder was a mess, and required almost 50 stitches to close. She figured Oliver weighed about 150 pounds, so cut the usual dose of Penicillin in half, and gave him a shot in his butt. When she had all the wounds closed, she bandaged the wounds with gauze and vet wrap. Anne never thought they would need to use the trauma kit on Oliver. Roy got on the radio, and called Allakaket. Luckily the MD on call had some experience in Veterinary Medicine, and suggested they switch to 10% Glucose in Normal Saline and keep the IV in until he was conscious, or they had administered 3 liters. They would need to keep him quiet while the stitches healed, and keep pushing the penicillin. He doubled the dosage, telling her it was OK to continue the Penicillin IM for a week if necessary. If Oliver was up and around and conscious, to discontinue the IM penicillin and give him the same dosage in tablet form tid or qid. They needed to push fluids to overcome dehydration due to blood loss, and to put him on a light diet. The doc asked if they had any rice, and Roy said Yes. The vet recommended a blend of meat and rice about a cup or two 3 times a day until Oliver was on his feet. He said that the stitches should come out in a week, but that was up to Oliver. Just keep him warm and quiet, and he should heal unless he lost too much blood.

Roy gently laid Oliver on the bearskin rug, and covered him with another skin. He grabbed his gear, put it on quickly, and grabbed the first aid kit.

"Roy Williams - Where are you going?"

"I've got to check and make sure Francine and the pups are OK. I'll be back as soon as possible. Keep an eye on Oliver for me, and please pray."

"Be careful Roy - don't get hurt."

"I'll be fine - I need to make sure Francine and the pups are OK, and I'll be right back."

With that, Roy was out the door, jogging toward the lake. When he got to the edge of the lake, he turned North then walked into the woods towards their den. When he got there, Francine was there with the pups, and everyone was OK. Evidently what had happened to Oliver happened away from the den. Roy stepped into the clearing and crouched down. "Moment of Truth" Roy thought. Francine made her way warily to Roy, then smelled Oliver's scent on him, and approached closer. Finally she sat down next to him. Roy didn't try to pet her, but instead looked into her eyes like he was trying to talk to her.

"Francine, Oliver's hurt bad - he's at our Cabin. We did all we could, but now he needs to rest. Take care of the pups, and I'll send Oliver back to you as soon as possible."

Francine picked up her paw and put it on Roy's leg - she'd never done that before. Roy hoped that meant she somehow understood. Then he remembered he left Anne all alone in the cabin, and turned around, and jogged all the way home.

“Francine and the pups are fine, I think Oliver ran into something away from the den.”

Anne walked quickly to his side and gave him a big hug. “Oliver is fine, he lost a lot of blood, but wolves are tough, and we got the bleeding stopped and replaced the fluid loss. I just started the second liter. I called the doc, and he said to save the Ringers and give him normal saline and 10% glucose, so I switched the IV when he finished the Ringers. Good thing we have six liters of Ringers.”

Roy broke down and cried - he had almost lost his best friend. Anne held onto him and cried too. Finally when they dried up, they noticed Oliver was regaining consciousness. He wasn't totally out of the woods, but it was a good sign. Anne removed the IV as soon as the second liter of 10% glucose solution was in, and bandaged the puncture site, since Oliver was waking up, and she didn't want him to pull his IV and cause more damage. Roy sat next to Oliver, petting and talking to him. Slowly Oliver woke up, and finally he opened his eyes and weakly licked Roy's hand. He started crying all over again, then went and got Oliver's water bowl and filled it full of water. Oliver was conscious enough to lap the water, then he went back to sleep. Roy laid right down next to him, and didn't move for the rest of the afternoon.

Chapter 44 - Payback

The next morning, Oliver was conscious but too weak to move. Anne made a big pot of the dog chow the vet recommended, a mixture of meat and rice boiled together and served warm. Oliver drank a bowl of water and ate some food.

Roy could stand it no longer - Someone or Something had hurt his best friend - he was so mad that he could just about kill whatever was responsible with his bare hands. He had a pretty good idea it was a Bear, and if it were wounded, it was probably nearby, which meant it was a threat not only to them, but to Francine and the pups, who were almost defenseless without Oliver. Roy got up from where he had laid next to Oliver all night, and without a word, started strapping on his gear. He carried a day bag as well as his fanny pack. He left the rifle alone - he wanted to do this up close and personal. His need for revenge was burning inside him.

Anne caught him preparing and asked “Roy Williams, where are you going?” knowing full well from the murderous look in his eyes that scared her to her core that he was going out for revenge.

“Anne - whatever mauled Oliver is still out there. As long as it’s alive, it’s a threat to us and the wolves. A wounded bear won’t hunt - they become scavengers, and this place is loaded with food smells. Stay here and take care of Oliver. I’ll be back as soon as I can - it couldn’t have got far.”

Anne realized there was no talking Roy out of this - so instead she gave him a big hug and kiss “Make sure you come back Roy - we need you too.”

“Anne - I fully well plan on it - Right now I’m too mad to lose - If I catch up with that Bear, he’ll be lucky if I shoot him first before I skin him. It might take me a day or so to track it down, don’t worry until I’ve been gone at least 3 days. I’ll come home by dark on the 3rd day if I don’t find it - then again I’m pretty sure it’s real close judging by the damage done to Oliver this bear was hurt bad and won’t travel far.”

Roy gave Anne a last hug, and patted Oliver, then left. As soon as he got out the door, he headed to where he found Oliver and started looking for sign. Almost immediately he spotted a faint blood trail, he was pretty sure it was Oliver’s since it was dripping fairly slowly. There was just one droplet for every couple of feet. Roy followed the blood trail 10 feet, then stopped and did a 360 to look and listen for signs of trouble. He did this 5 times, then he came across a spot that he was pretty sure was the site of the fight, since all the brush was beaten down, and there were multiple blood marks. Finally, Roy got onto the Bear’s trail. Oliver definitely got the better of the fight - this bear was bleeding heavily, judging by the size of the blood trail left. Roy was very careful now, because he could come across

whatever animal caused the blood trail. A wounded animal was very dangerous. The blood trail led to a fallen tree. Thinking that the animal might be right on the other side of it, Roy circled around carefully to the left, with his .44 Magnum out and pointed in front of himself at low-ready. As he got around the side of the tree, he saw a large brown bear slumped up against it. Roy wasn't sure if it was alive or dead, so he picked up a rock to see if the bear would move if he hit it. The resulting roar of pain told him the bear was still alive, so taking careful aim, Roy eased the hammer back on his Colt Anaconda and centered the left eye of the bear in his sights. When his sight picture steadied, he squeezed the trigger, and the bear collapsed. Roy figured the bear was almost dead anyway, but just in case, he decided to shoot it, and put it out of its misery, besides if it got better, it might come after them again. He holstered his gun, and calmly walked back to the cabin. As soon as he opened the door, Anne practically tackled him in her happiness to see him again. Anne asked him what had happened.

"Oliver definitely got the better of that scrap, when I got to the bear, it was alive, but just barely. I shot it both to put it out of its misery, and to make sure it couldn't come back to hurt us. He's only about a quarter mile away, so I'm going to get the cart and drag the carcass over to Francine and the pups - I'm sure they could use the meat with Oliver out of commission."

"OK, Roy, just be careful."

Anne gave Roy another hug and a kiss, and Roy went to refill his camelback before heading out and grabbing the cart. When he got to the bear, he slung the strap around the carcass and hauled it aboard the cart using the winch. It was a very big bear. Roy was tired by the time he finished, but he had one more chore to do. He turned around, slung the straps around his shoulders, and picked up the cart handles. Good thing he had taken the time to balance the load, or he would have never lifted it. About an hour later, he came to Oliver's den. Francine and the pups were sitting there like they were expecting him. Francine alerted to the smell of the bear, but didn't get any more aggressive. Roy felt this was close enough, and dropped his burden on the ground, and taking his Bowie knife, slashed open the stomach of the bear from brisket to butt. Francine and the pups walked over and took care of the rest. Roy picked up his cart, and walked back to the cabin.

When he got inside, he could see Oliver was feeling better. He was still asleep, but woke up when he heard Roy come in. Roy laid down next to him, and petted Oliver for a while. He started talking to Oliver "Buddy, I got the bear that attacked you - he's now feeding the missus and your pups. They'll be OK until you get better, so rest easy friend."

Anne took Roy aside and said that she thought Oliver was healing remarkably well for all the damage, and might be OK to get up and move around within a week.

"Good thing I bagged that bear - they'll need the food. It will be a while until Oliver is fit to

hunt again.” Roy swore under his breath - the timing of Oliver’s injury couldn’t have been worse. His family needed lots of food to get fat for the lean winter. Anne was in no condition to go hunting anymore. Maybe he could bag a couple of caribou or something, but then he’d have to drag it all back by himself. Roy didn’t know WHAT to do.

“Anne, I need your help. The timing of Oliver’s injury couldn’t have been worse. They are going to need more meat to gain enough weight to make it through the winter. Oliver won’t be catching anything much bigger than a lazy bunny any time soon. I was thinking if I went hunting and bagged a couple of caribou, I could drag back the meatiest quarters back to the den, and they could feed on that and gain weight.”

“Roy what about us. I mean if something happened to you, when the food ran out, unless they could fly us out of here, we’d starve.”

“Anne, Francine and the pups can’t fly out of here - if they don’t get some food, they’ll starve. Oliver has saved my life and yours more than once. I owe it to him to try.”

“OK Roy, I can see your point, but please be CAREFUL - I don’t want to loose you.”

“Not to worry, from what Susan said, I’m going to be here a while. Anyway, it’s too late to go today, so I’ll get ready to go first thing tomorrow. All I’m going to do is skin and brain tan the hides, then quarter the carcass and haul it back to the den. That has to be much lighter than hauling the entire carcass.”

“I think you’re right, anyway, let’s eat dinner, I’m hungry.”

Anne had dinner ready, so she served it up, and Roy said Grace. He was almost in tears thanking God for sparing his friend, and providing for Francine and the pups. He asked that his hunt be successful, and that they all would survive the winter. Anne said “Amen” loud enough to wake Oliver, who looked around, and not seeing anything dangerous, went back to sleep. After dinner, Roy checked and packed his backpack and fanny pack for a week outdoors. He explained to Anne he shouldn’t be gone more than 4 or 5 days, but he wanted to be prepared. He packed enough jerky for a week, and his jacket since it was starting to get cold at night. Anne handed Roy a small nylon package.

“Anne, what’s this?”

“It’s my mummy bag - it’s good to 40 below - I know you don’t like tents, but this might keep you warmer than that space blanket. Besides, if you noticed, I’d sewn two loops onto the bottom of your daybag to carry it. I’ve got something else for you.” She handed him a box, and when he opened it, it was a set of “mountain man” clothes made out of caribou skin with the fur still on. Then she handed him a set of apache style lace-up boots with vibram soles.

“Anne - where did you get the soles?”

“I had these buried away in case you wanted another set of boots. You would never imagine how hard they are to hand sew. There are 2 more sets of soles in storage in case you wear these out - but next time, you can stitch them on.”

Roy hugged Anne hard enough for her to complain “Easy Dear - there’s not as much room here as there used to be.” Roy eased up immediately, and she held him for a long time. When he finished packing, they went to bed since he wanted to be up and going at first light.

Chapter 45 Hunting

The next morning, Roy was up bright and early, Anne made him breakfast, then he sat down and petted Oliver, who was looking better, but still not up and around. Anne had his Caribou skin clothing out for him already, so he put on the shirt and pants, and they fit perfectly, and the seams were much straighter. He put the boots on, and while they were smug, they were a perfect fit. Roy thanked Anne, and said that she could make clothes for him anytime - she was much better with a needle and thread than he was. He got up and gave her a big kiss, then went to open the door because he heard a whine. When he opened the door, Francine and the pups were sitting there, so Roy let them in. Francine walked up to Oliver, and sat down in front of him, then licked his muzzle. Oliver gave her a lick behind her ear, and then the pups came around. Roy was amazed how gentle the normally boisterous pups were around Oliver, it was almost like they knew to be gentle around their dad. Roy picked up his gear, and was ready to leave when Francine and the pups got up to follow him. Anne said "I guess this means you're going to have an escort after all."

This changed Roy's plans - with the wolves following him, he wouldn't have to lug all that meat back. Thinking quickly, he asked Anne "Do we need any meat, and do you have any canning jars left?"

Anne waddled to the kitchen, and said "I've got a case of jars left, why?"

"What about if I shoot 2 caribou, let them eat 1 whole one there, and I bring back both the skins and the meat in quarters. We could fill up the jars, make sausage and I can jerk the rest."

"Sounds like a plan - hurry home dear." Roy gave Anne a big hug and a kiss, put his shoulder harness, backpack and fanny pack on, and picked up his rifle, slinging it over his shoulder, then walked outside and grabbed the cart. He whistled for Francine and the pups, which followed right along with him. He set a quick pace since he had an escort, and figured Francine and the pups would alert him to anything dangerous. This late in the season, most of the bears would be heading to their dens to sleep the winter away. Even so, better to be safe than sorry. He reached his first campground before dark without incident, and was amazed there were still some brook trout remaining in the stream. Taking out his mini fishing kit, he tried his luck at catching them. They must have been hungry, because they gobbled the bait as soon as it appeared in front of them. Soon he had 4 nice brook trout, and saving one for himself, gave Francine and the pups the other 3. When he had gutted the trout, he added the guts to their share, then made camp and broiled the fish over the fire on a stick. When he was finished, he made a comfortable bed out of boughs, and unrolled his mummy bag. He took his boots off and crawled into the mummy bag. He was as warm as he ever was, and it was cold outside - he could tell because his nose was cold. Francine and the pups snuggled close to stay warm. "I hope Anne doesn't mind wolf fur on her mummy

bag” thought Roy as he drifted off to sleep.

Roy was up at first light, and shook out the mummy bag, which was covered with dog hair, then put his boots on. Next he decided he needed to water a tree, and when he came back, he struck camp, put everything back in his pack where it belonged, then put on all his gear, grabbed the cart and shoved off. Francine and the pups, who were looking more like wolves every day, trotted alongside when they weren’t exploring the neighborhood. Roy was in a hurry, and didn’t have time to notice scenery this time, since he needed to bag two caribou today and skin them before dark. The moose hollow was deserted as he suspected, so he pushed on to the caribou field, making it right before noon. He put down the cart, dropped all his stuff, and crawled to the edge of the clearing.

The pickings were mighty slim, since all the cows and the dominant bulls had moved on. All that was left was several sub-dominant bulls who were maybe 2-5 years old. Roy picked the largest 2 of them, stuck his earplugs in his ears, and set up the bipod on his rifle. Lying prone behind it, he got into a good position, and glassed the bulls with the scope. He estimated the range at about 200 yards, and adjusted the scope down 8 clicks for the range. Then he cycled a round into the action, and released the safety. He steadied his breathing as best as possible, and squeezed the trigger right when it steadied on the bull’s neck/shoulder junction like Anne did. “Shit.” he muttered as he saw the bullet go sailing over the bull, but recovered quickly and chambered another round. “So much for sniper shots Roy - just do the job.” The next round nailed the bull right in the 10-ring of the heart/lung region, and the bull went down in a heap. Reloading before the herd could spook, he targeted the next bull and shot it in the same spot. He too fell in a heap. Roy unloaded the rifle and closed the action on an empty chamber, then went back to get his stuff. As he wheeled his cart into the clearing, the rest of the caribou fled.

Since both bulls were about the same size, he walked to the closest one, skinned it and cut the head off, then left the rest to the wolves. He walked the cart over to the other animal, and skinned and gutted it, then cut the head off and quartered it. He set the quarters of meat in a trash bag on the cart, and started brain tanning the skins. It was getting dark when he finished, so he moved over to the spot he made camp last time, and quickly made camp, setting up the tarp with the Mylar lining, and building a reflector fire. Roy wasn’t really hungry, so he drank some tea and ate jerky until he felt like it was time for bed. He could see the wolves chowing down until the light faded. Finally he got sleepy and took off his boots and climbed into the mummy bag. He woke up a couple of times during the night when he heard noises, but it was just the wolves enjoying their feast.

The next morning, the wolves were stuffed to the gills and in no position to move. He quickly packed his stuff and got ready to go. Roy knew they would be OK and would catch up after they digested their huge meal, so he got into the harness so he could pull the cart and picked it up. It was much lighter than when he had the bear on board, and he made good time back to his campground. There weren’t any fish around, so he ate some jerky for

dinner. He was glad that they were flavored with teriyaki; otherwise he was pretty sure he needed to get a lot hungrier before he would eat this jerky plain. He made a camp fire, and set up the tarp to reflect the heat of the fire, and unrolled the mummy bag. When he got tired, he took off his boots, and making sure his guns and flashlight were close at hand, climbed into the mummy bag. He slept soundly, and didn't hear anything at all.

He awoke at first light, put his boots on, watered a different tree this time, and packed his bag. Making sure the fire was out, he put his gear back on when he spotted Francine and the pups waddling down the trail towards him. They still looked like potbellied pigs, but at least their bellies weren't scraping the ground anymore. Since he didn't have too far to go today, he waited for them. Francine and the pups drank from the stream, then watered every tree in the neighborhood. When they were finished, Roy picked up the cart and started off, but moving slower than last time in deference to their porked-out bellies. Roy walked comfortably toward the cabin, with Francine and the pups waddling along behind. Shortly before dark, they arrived at the cabin. Roy set the cart down, and Anne met him outside.

Roy was worried until Anne said that Oliver was fine, she just didn't want to step on his tail when she gave him a big hug. Anne squeezed Roy as hard as she dared in her very pregnant condition, and gave him a big kiss. Roy kissed her back, then told her he needed to wash up, and walked in. Oliver was sitting up wagging his tail as Roy walked in. Roy walked over and wrapped his arms around Oliver's neck and gave him a big hug. "Oliver seems you've been feeling better. Me and the missus took the pups out hunting, hope you don't mind. They ate a whole caribou by themselves - they still look big enough to bust. Anyway, I'm glad your better, but you need to stay here for a few more days until the stitches come out." With that, he got up and washed off. Anne met him at the door "I don't know who's got the biggest belly around here - them or me."

"Anne - they're bellies are much bigger proportionally. I don't think your belly would drag on the ground if you got on your hands and knees."

"Maybe not, but I feel like I'd need a crane to get back up."

Roy took this opportunity to run his hands over her.

"Roy, not while the kids are awake."

Roy looked down and Oliver was giving them a funny doggie look, like "what are you two doing?"

Roy started laughing and said "OK, I'll wait until the kids are asleep." and gave Anne a big kiss and a pat. When he went back outside, Francine and the pups were sprawled out where they lay. Roy took the meat and hung it in the smokehouse for now - he'd bone and butcher it tomorrow. While Roy was taking care of the Caribou quarters, Anne made a simple

dinner, she didn't really feel like slaving over a hot stove tonight. Later that evening, Roy took a bath, and crawled into bed with Anne. Reaching over, he started tickling her, as she giggled, Roy said "Quiet, you'll wake the kids." They spent the rest of the night in each other's arms.

Chapter 46 - Chores Again?

When Roy got up, Anne didn't seem to be feeling too good, so he made breakfast. He reconstituted some powdered scrambled eggs, and sautéed a can of Corned Beef hash. When it was cooked, he added the eggs, and stirred until it was thoroughly cooked. Meanwhile he had a pot of coffee percolating on the stove. He set the table, then served breakfast. By the time breakfast was ready, Anne was feeling better. When they finished eating, Roy prepared some food for Oliver, who was eating like a pig. When Oliver finished eating, Roy let him out to answer the call of the wild, but kept an eye on him. As soon as he was finished, Roy called him back in. Oliver walked back in and promptly plopped down on the bearskin rug. Roy called the Doc, and asked him about removing the sutures. He said he would get back to him about what to do, since it would be at least another couple of days, and he wanted to e-mail a veterinarian friend of his to find out what sedative to use, and how much.

Roy remembered that he had a smokehouse full of caribou quarters that he needed to de-bone and butcher, so he cleaned off the table, and Anne got out the canning equipment, and their remaining case of canning jars and lids. Roy cut the meat off the bones, and then cut it into sections small enough to fit in the canning jars while Anne boiled water and otherwise got ready for canning. Roy could see the difficulty she was having, and realized this would be the last time she could do any kind of heavy work for a long time. When he had all the meat cut and in jars, he helped Anne with canning the meat, and then he ground the leftovers into sausage, then stuffed the last of their sausage casings with the ground caribou. This process took most of the day, and when he was finished, Roy felt as tired as Anne looked. He heated up a couple of cans of Spaghetti-O's for dinner, and they went to bed shortly thereafter.

The next morning, Roy went to work on his woodpile, splitting wood he had previously cut, and stacking it in front of the cabin, leaving a route out the front door and to the outhouse. When he finished, he told Anne they needed to take the water pumps in soon, and he called the Mayor, who said they had at least a couple of more weeks of good weather before they were expecting any snow. The mayor told Roy to call the Doc, he had some info he requested. Roy switched frequencies, and the doc started talking to him, but he might as well have been speaking Greek. He put Anne on the radio, and she took notes, then said she would call him back. She looked through their med kit, and sure enough, there were several 20ml vials of injectable Diprivan (propofol). She called the doc back, and told her to inject 3-6mg/kg IM before she removed the sutures and Oliver would never feel a thing, and he'd wake up within a half hour. Anne was standing there with a funny look on her face, when Roy asked her what was wrong, she said, "I never ordered this stuff - Steve must have included it since it's a fast acting sedative and it wears off fast, and doesn't suppress respiration. It's the drug of choice for out-patient surgery. Best of all, it works on Humans and Animals."

“Great - so when are we going to remove Oliver’s stitches?”

“They’ve been in a week, they can come out any time now. Can you help me check his sutures, I want to make sure they aren’t infected before I take them out.” Anne looked Oliver’s sutures over, and they weren’t infected. She tugged experimentally on a couple of them, and the tissue was almost totally healed around them - she was amazed at how fast wolves healed.

She told Roy that the sutures really needed to come out now, before the skin closed in around them. She took out her suture removal kit, washed her hands, and had Roy do the same, then they both put on exam gloves.

“Roy, how much do you think Oliver weighs?”

“Before or after a meal?”

“Before - I need to know his weight so I can estimate the dosage. I’m going to go with the 3mg/kg dosage just in case we overestimate his weight.” Anne got out her calculator “Let’s see - 150 pounds divided by 2.2 equal 68 Kilograms - times 3 equals 204 mg. The concentration on this vial says 10mg/ml and it’s a 20ml vial - that’s 200mg - close enough.”

She noticed the confused look on Roy’s face, and stopped what she was doing “Roy, you need to know this. This is how you figure a dosage. The PDR or other source will give dosage in a form like milligrams per kilogram of weight, and you need to have the drug vial in front of you, and know the concentration of drug in the vial. In this case it is 10mg/ml. We estimated Oliver’s weight at 150 pounds, and you take that figure and divide by 2.2 to get kilograms, in this case 68 kilograms. Multiplying the low end of the dosage by the weight in kilograms since we only want to mildly sedate Oliver gives you a dosage of 204mg. The vial says the concentration of drug in the vial is 10mg/ml since the drug is in an injectable vehicle and not 100% drug. The vial contains 20ml. Multiply the concentration by the volume equals 200mg available in this vial. Since the recommended dosage was 204 mg, we simply give Oliver the entire vial. Since that is usually NOT the case, remember that ml=cc, and the syringe is marked in cc. Say the dosage was 100mg, instead of taking half the vial and maybe making a fatal error, divide the recommended dosage by the concentration and it will give you the cc’s, or in the example 10cc’s - got it.”

“Thanks Anne, I actually understood it, maybe later you could write that down and put it on a card with the drug vials.”

“Great idea Roy, sometimes it’s hard to remember that stuff under pressure. I’ll do it right after we remove Oliver’s stitches.”

Since Oliver was laying on his side already, Anne walked over to Oliver, shook the vial to

make sure the medicine was thoroughly mixed, inverted the vial, inserted the needle and pumped the vial full of air. When she was finished, she pulled the needle partly out, until it was just inside the liquid of the vial, released the tension on the plunger and the syringe filled itself due to the excess pressure in the vial. She drew out 10cc, bent over and slid the needle into Oliver's hind quarters. He didn't even growl he was so tired. Anne was glad, and started injecting the drug slowly, monitoring Oliver's level of consciousness, and talking to Roy all the while, explaining what she was doing. "The point of sedation is to relax the patient, and reduce the level of consciousness until the subject doesn't feel pain, but not to the point of unconsciousness or anesthesia. This drug also works in combination with Nitrous Oxide as an anesthetic. You give this drug in a divided dosage, and slowly. There, now I've got the first half in. Oliver seems to be resting comfortably, but I want his level of consciousness just a bit deeper so he doesn't bite us when we remove his stitches." Anne quickly reloaded the syringe with the remaining contents of the vial, and carefully expelled a drop of drug with the needle facing up to make sure there were no air bubbles. She didn't need to do that last time, since she never removed the needle from the vial between expelling the air in the syringe into the vial, and withdrawing the fluid. She approached Oliver, and relocated her injection site slightly then injected Oliver with the remainder of the drug. Oliver was thoroughly sedated by now, and Anne was sure it would be safe to remove his stitches. First she bent the needle against the table, and disposed of the used syringe into a red plastic sharps box they had in the other room.

Roy was holding the suture removal kit, and Anne tore the plastic covering off, removed the suture scissors and tweezers, and started cutting the knots of the sutures, then pulling the sutures out by the knots. She was glad they sedated Oliver, since some of the stitches were stuck, and she had to pull harder than she liked, but they all came out clean without any bleeding. An hour later, all the stitches were out, and Oliver was starting to regain consciousness. A couple of hours later, Oliver had fully regained consciousness, so Roy sat a bowl of water in front of him, and Oliver drank the whole bowl.

"Oliver should be OK to let out for good by tomorrow or the next day, let's keep a close eye on him for the next couple of hours, but I'm sure he's going to be ok."

Anne cleaned up the area around Oliver, and Roy made dinner, while cooking a batch of food for Oliver. Roy set the table, and when dinner was ready, plated it and served it. They said grace and ate quietly. After dinner, Oliver woke up enough for Roy to feed him, and Roy filled his bowl. 15 minutes later, it was empty again, so Roy refilled it, and gave him some fresh water. After dinner, Oliver sacked out again, and a couple of hours later, Roy and Anne joined him.

Chapter 47 - Recovery

The next morning, Roy and Anne got dressed, and Roy went to check on Oliver. He was standing near the door, and Roy knew that he needed to go out. Roy let him out and watched him carefully. Oliver seemed to be a little stiff, but was moving OK and didn't seem to be in pain. Roy walked outside to use the outhouse, and remembering Anne's little adventure, shined a flashlight into the outhouse to make sure it wasn't previously occupied. When he was finished, he called Oliver, who trotted over to see him. Oliver sat down next to him, and proceeded to lick Roy's hand. Roy petted Oliver carefully, avoiding the areas that they had just removed the stitches from. Without thinking, Roy bent over and picked up a stick and threw it. Oliver sat there and watched it sail into the brush without so much as moving. Roy started laughing "Oh well , guess I forgot to teach you how to Fetch." Roy then opened the cabin door, and whistled for Oliver, who walked right in as if he owned the place, then plopped down on "his" bearskin rug. Meanwhile, Anne had made breakfast, and heated up some food for Oliver as well. Roy could tell that Oliver was feeling much better when he wolfed his breakfast in four big bites. Roy knew that Oliver needed to go back to Francine and the pups soon, besides, he was just about out of smoked dried fish. Roy didn't really care for it, but was glad he had it to feed Oliver during his convalescence. After breakfast, Roy reached a decision. "Anne, I think Oliver needs to go back to Francine and the pups - they need their Daddy."

"I think you're right Roy, make sure you put on your fanny pack and shoulder holster. Since he was wearing his Caribou skin clothes - with the hair on for extra warmth, he didn't need a jacket yet. Roy put on his shoulder holster and fanny pack, kissed Anne, and headed to the door. "Come On, Oliver - let's go."

Oliver got up, and headed toward the door when Roy opened it, and walked outside. Roy headed toward the lake, then turned north until he was near the den, then he sat down by the lake, and Oliver sat beside him. "Well Oliver, I have to let you go again. You need to be with Francine and your pups, as much as I love you and love having you around, I can't be selfish. I'll pray for you and your family every day. If I don't see you between now and Spring, Good Luck and Godspeed." Roy held Oliver around the collar for a while and cried - he was going to miss Oliver more than he realized. When he stopped crying, he let go of Oliver, and Oliver turned to lick Roy's face. He licked all the tears off his face, and then turned around and trotted to the clearing. Before he disappeared from sight, he turned his head and looked back at Roy, as if to say "So Long and Thanks for All the Fish." Then he was gone. Roy got up to go home, and didn't remember anything until he opened the door. As soon as he got inside, he gave Anne a big hug and broke down again. Realizing what was happening, Anne held onto him without asking any questions. Finally when he stopped sobbing, Anne said "I know Roy, I'll miss him too, but I know he'll be all right, and we'll see him next Spring."

Chapter 48 - Spring has Sprung

The rest of the winter passed uneventfully, and Roy was remembering all that had happened. There were several blizzards, and he had to dig out more than once, but with the larger windbreaks, the snow didn't drift right up to the door as it had last year. Two weeks after returning Oliver to Francine and the pups, he had to take the water pumps out and store them in the cabin. He filled up every water container he had first, which amounted to almost 50 gallons of water. Anne was going to miss the hot and cold running water, but they would make do. Once it started snowing, Roy collected the snow he had to shovel into a large pot to melt near the fireplace, then he transferred the water to his plastic water jugs, and kept them filled. Anne took advantage of the porta-potty as she got more pregnant, and Roy dumped it every couple of days. Storms didn't sneak up on them anymore, since the mayor called as soon as the Weather Service predicted a major storm for their area, so he had plenty of warning to get ready. Anne spent most of the winter laying on the bed or finding another comfortable position to sit and read her Bible. Roy continued his medical studies, and finally understood the doctor when they talked. He told Roy that they should get him an EMT certificate to make it official. Since there wasn't any mail service, the point was moot.

While the lake was still frozen, the US military kicked loose a ski-equipped C-130 to bring in several fuel bladders full of Aviation gas and diesel for the community. This filled the tanks of the fuel depot, but they still restricted flights since there were no hunters or anyone moving around for the winter. When the lake melted, the Mayor decided it was OK to resume limited flights, and took orders from the homesteaders to restock their cabins. Roy and Anne took advantage of the situation to order a bunch of disposable diapers, and enough food to restock the pantry. Roy checked the pipes, and they hadn't frozen during the winter. Evidently there was enough of a slope to drain the pipes naturally. Roy reconnected the pumps to the pipes, and re-established water service to the garden and the cabin. Anne was grateful for hot water again, and immediately took a bath.

As her due date approached, Anne got more and more uncomfortable, and Roy wound up doing most of the household chores and whatever needed doing outside. Finally, Anne told Roy "It's Time, I think my water just broke."

Roy went into "Panic Mode" as most husbands do at this time, then Anne reminded him "Roy, this is my first delivery - it could take a while."

Anne started her deep breathing techniques as the contractions started. When they got 5 minutes apart, Roy stripped the bed, replaced the bottom sheet with a piece of Visqueen, and tucked the corners under. Anne stripped off her clothing and got into bed. Roy got out the delivery kit - actually it was already out, he just moved it within arm's reach, and started the delivery protocol of measuring Anne's dilation, timing the contractions, and listening to the fetal heartbeat to make sure the baby was OK. Remembering something one of the Village

Women had told him, he took a bottle of Olive Oil and spread it around her perineal area because she said it would prevent tearing the Perineum, making an episiotomy unnecessary. This seemed to help as Anne progressed to delivery, he couldn't see any signs of tearing.

With every contraction, Anne's cries of pain grew louder and louder. Roy knew the birth would be soon, since he could see the top of his son's head protruding from the birth canal. Roy placed his gloved hand there to support and provide gentle resistance to keep the head from being delivered too fast. Roy reminded Anne to pant during this phase of delivery, but she was doing fine all on her own. As his son's head was delivered, Roy remembered to support the head with both hands, and allow it to rotate naturally. Roy slipped his fingers around his son's neck to feel for the umbilical cord, but it wasn't in the way. He immediately suctioned his son's mouth and nose to clear his airway, then let Nature take its course. Roy spoke up to encourage Anne. "You're doing fine Anne, the head is delivered and I'm waiting for the shoulders. This should be over in a matter of minutes." Soon both shoulders were out, and then came the rest of his son. Roy took this time to thoroughly suction out his mouth and nose, keeping him in a slightly head-down position to encourage the lungs to drain. Once the cord stopped pulsing, Roy tied it off, and cut between the ties. He wrapped his son in a delivery blanket, then placed him on Anne's belly.

"Congratulations Anne - we have a Son. All 10 fingers and toes are there, and everything's OK. Just waiting on the delivery of the placenta, then we're done here."

As soon as it was apparent the Placenta was being delivered, Roy told Anne to "Push" to expel it. As it was delivered, Roy bagged it and set it aside, then cleaned Anne up.

Jr. was doing just fine, and after Roy was finished with Anne, applied some drops to his eyes, checked his respiration and color, and he was pinkening up nicely. He kept massaging Anne's belly to prevent uterine relaxation and excess bleeding. Roy picked up Junior and moved him closer to Anne's breast. He found her nipple all by himself, and was soon nursing vigorously. Roy covered the two of them with a light blanket to let them rest as they were both exhausted. He checked Anne's temperature every couple of hours, and checked Jr's pulse and respiration, and everyone seemed OK.

"Anne, we can't keep on calling our Son Junior - he needs a name."

"How about Ron?"

"Works for me - Ron Williams, welcome to the world."

Ron had his priorities straight and was busy with dinner. Roy got on the radio to give the Mayor the good news.

"Roy, congratulations to You and Anne, what's your son's name?"

“We decided to name him Ron. Ron Williams.”

“Great - I’ll tell Jim and everyone else. Let us know when they’re up to visitors. I’m sure Jim wants to see his new grandkid.”

“Bill, I’ll talk to you later, the 3 of us are pretty tired right now.”

Roy turned off the radio and sat down in the chair. “Imagine that - me a Dad again. Hope I do better with this one than the last 2.”

Roy bowed his head in prayer “Thank you Lord for giving me a Son, I’ll try to do my best to raise him right, but I’m going to need a lot of help. Take care of Anne too. Amen.”

By the time he got up, Anne was almost asleep with Ron still suckling intermittently, he was pretty tired too. Roy went into the kitchen, washed his hands, and made a can of Spaghetti-O’s for dinner, then ate at the table. Anne had rolled over to give Roy some room, so he got undressed and laid next to his wife and new son, then pulled a bearskin over himself and partly over Anne, then they all fell asleep.

Chapter 49 - Diapers

The next morning, Roy remembered his son had spent the night with a naked butt. Fearing the worst, he got a pair of infant disposable diapers out, and uncovered Anne and Ron just enough to quickly diaper his son. Good thing, because 2 minutes later, his son filled his diapers with a foul smelling substance. "I knew there was something I forgot." Roy picked his son up, laid him on the improvised changing table, cleaned him up, and powdered his butt, then put him in clean diapers. Since it was cold in there, or at least cold enough that Roy felt he needed it, he dressed his son in his jammies. Roy realized that his son wasn't going to be in infant sizes long. He was a big kid. When he finished, he held his son for a while and talked to him. "Welcome to the world Son. I'll try to do a better job with you than I did with the last 2." Roy sat there entranced with his son, then noticed he was squirming and making sucking motions, and realized he wanted breakfast. He walked over to the bed, and laid his son right where he had picked him up from. His son found Anne's nipple quickly, and was soon suckling again. Anne moaned in her sleep, and moved to hold her son. Roy felt an intimacy with the 2 of them he had never felt before. The scene before him of mother and son was mesmerizing in its simplicity and timelessness. Roy just sat there for a minute, then realized he was standing there in the buff, and it was cold in there. Roy quickly got dressed in his buckskins, and went outside to use the outhouse. When he came back, his son was still nursing, so he covered them up again, at least enough to keep Anne comfortable, and went into the kitchen to make coffee. Breakfast would have to wait. When the coffee was done, he poured a mug, sat down with the steaming hot coffee and his Bible, and started reading. He must have fallen asleep in his chair, because the next thing he saw was Anne's face shaking his shoulder. "Roy, do you want breakfast?"

"What time is it?"

"Almost noon dear - did you put diapers on Ron?"

"I did that this morning, and 2 minutes later, he filled them with a big stinky load."

"Poor guy - not even a Daddy by 1 day, and you're already changing stinky diapers."

"Anne, let me make breakfast. You should take it easy."

"I was hoping you'd say that. I'm not too hungry, but I could go for Bacon, Eggs and Pancakes."

"Anne, I'd hate to see what you'd be like if you were hungry."

"Real funny Daddy, now go make breakfast."

Roy put his bible up, and noticed Anne was holding Ron in her arms, and she was dressed in her housecoat. Her son was still nursing.”

“I can see healthy appetites run in the family.”

“Good thing I’ve got two spigots, this little bugger’s almost drained the first one.”

“Another chowhound in the family.”

Roy got up and made breakfast, and when he was finished, sure enough, Anne had switched Ron over to her other breast. Roy set the table, and Anne ate breakfast while Ron got his breakfast. When she was finished eating (it took longer one handed) Anne commented she had better increase her water intake - good thing Roy had got the pumps hooked up last week. Roy brought her a big glass of water and Anne drank it right down. He poured her 3 more glasses, and she drank them all straight down. Finally, she started sipping glass #4, which meant she was almost full. When she finished the 4th glass, she handed Ron to Roy, and made a beeline for the outhouse. When she came back, they all got back into bed again, so she could nurse and be comfortable and warm. Roy had no problem with that, since he was still sleepy. Anne lay with her back to Roy, who wrapped his arms around her and Ron, and they were soon fast asleep.

Chapter 50 - The Runt

Roy awoke the next morning to a scratching noise at the door. He opened it carefully, and Francine was sitting there with a pup held by the scruff of the neck. Roy could tell immediately that it was a runt by its size. Francine walked into the cabin, and deposited the pup on the bearskin rug where Oliver used to sleep, then turned around and walked to the door and sat down next to Roy. Roy was petting her when it dawned on him what Francine wanted. She didn't want her pup to die, and she didn't have enough milk to feed all of them, so she brought it over to Roy's cabin in the hopes that they could save it. Roy talked to Francine and told her not to worry - they'd take good care of her pup. Francine seemed to understand, and licked Roy's hand, then walked out of the cabin without looking back. She had to get back to her other pups. Roy immediately bundled up the pup to keep him warm, and put a hot water bottle next to him, then got on the radio to ask for help. Jim was with the mayor, and told him that he had hand-raised a litter of pups once, and it was the same idea. He gave him a basic puppy formula that would give him what he needed. Roy checked, and sure enough, the runt was a male pup. He couldn't keep calling him The Runt, so he asked Anne. She immediately suggested calling him Sam, since that was the name of a boy that used to pester her in kindergarten, and this would be payback of sorts. Roy went into the kitchen, and started some water boiling. Good thing they had those disposable infant bottles. When the water had cooled, he added a can of evaporated milk to 3 oz of water, and a tablespoon of fresh lard, and 2 tablespoons of dehydrated egg powder. He didn't have the yogurt, so he would have to think of something to replace it. He whisked the mixture thoroughly, and poured about 100 ml into a bottle, then poked several holes in the nipple until the mixture just dripped out when he inverted the bottle. He tested the warmth of the mixture against his skin, and it was warm but not hot. He walked into the living room, and lay down next to the pup, curled him up against his chest, and fed him the bottle. At first the pup sucked weakly, but he gradually gained strength, and soon finished the bottle. Roy refilled the hot water bottle, and tucked Sam back into the bearskin rug next to the water bottle. Sam would be as snug as a bug in a rug. He remembered that since Oliver slept there repeatedly that Sam would be very comfortable since his dad's scent was all over the rug.

Roy checked the pup in 3-4 hours, picked it up, carried it outside and took a piece of wet cotton and rubbed its butt. A few minutes later, Sam dropped a puppy pile, and peed. Roy carried Sam back into the cabin, laid him in the bearskin rug, and refilled the hot water bottle. Sam zonked out as soon as Roy added the water bottle. 3 hours later, he warmed some more formula and fed Sam again, then took him out to the same spot and Sam went on his own without any help. Roy felt like Anne had the easier job, all she had to do was lay there and let Ron nurse. 3 hours later, it was feeding time again - this could get to be a royal pain. Roy heated some formula, fed Sam who sucked the entire bottle down. Roy burped Sam, and when he was finished, they played for a few minutes. Sam was a beautiful pup, with black and white mixed fur, and deep blue eyes. He looked more like a Sled Dog than a wolf. Roy remembered reading somewhere that domestic dogs resembled wolf teenagers.

He could easily agree to that. Sam was more fun than Oliver, but tired easily. Roy put Sam back to bed with a fresh water bottle, and lay down on the bearskin next to Sam to get some sleep of his own. Luckily Anne was now feeling good enough to change Ron since Roy was dog tired. Anne thought the two of them lying next to each other was seriously cute. She hoped Sam didn't have any fleas, then remembered Alaska was too cold for fleas. Roy woke up when Sam started whining, so he made a fresh batch of formula and fed Sam another 100 ml of it. Roy thought that Sam and Ron were both a bunch of chowhounds. When he finished feeding Sam, he took him outside again, and Sam went right where he did last time. Roy praised Sam, and rubbed his fur, then picked him up and carried him back inside. He gave Sam a fresh hot water bottle, and Sam was soon fast asleep. Roy joined him again, and Anne was lying in bed nursing Ron.

When it got dark out, Roy decided to make dinner, but made Sam's formula first and fed him while dinner was cooking. He grabbed his flashlight to light the way for Sam's nightly excursion. Sam had the routine down cold, and was in a hurry to get back inside, since it was still cold outside. Roy put Sam down with a fresh hot water bottle, and finished dinner. Anne ate one handed while Ron nursed. After dinner, Roy cleaned up and Anne changed Ron's diaper, then they went to bed.

The next morning, Roy called Jim, and he did some checking, and suggested adding a teaspoon of Karo syrup to the mix. Roy had a quart in the pantry, so he added the syrup to the next batch. Sam seemed to be thriving on the formula. Jim said he had some liquid vitamins he'd bring up on the next trip. Roy asked him to bring a case of the next size larger disposable diapers, and a couple of cases of evaporated milk. Jim said he'd be there later that week. Sam loved the new formula, and was practically wolfing it down. Roy could almost see Sam getting bigger by the day, he was no longer a scrawny runt, he was a roly-poly puppy. Roy kept Sam entertained, and Sam snuggled up to Roy at naptime. Sam had definitely imprinted on Roy. Roy was glad, because if Sam were domesticated, he would be a playmate for Ron as he grew up, and a measure of security when he hunted. Roy called Jim back as soon as Sam went down for a doggie nap, and added a bunch of things to the list. It might be a while until they got re-supplied again, so he wanted to make the trip count. Sam woke up a couple of hours later, and guess what, he was hungry again. Roy felt like this would never end, and hoped wolf pups weaned early.

A couple of days later, Jim showed up, and the first thing he did was pick up Ron and hold him. Anne closed her top when she heard the plane, so everyone was decent. Jim held Ron for the longest time, and only handed him back to his mother when he started squalling. "That's one thing I love about being a Grandpa, I get to spoil them to death, and then hand them back to you." Jim checked out Sam next, and was impressed by his weight gain. He was gaining weight faster than if he'd been in the wild. He wouldn't be "the runt" much longer. Jim started unloading the plane. They had ordered so much stuff that it took a while. Anne made sure they stocked up on diapers and baby stuff. Anne was confused when Jim brought in a food mill. "Roy we already have one of those."

“I know, but I figured Ron wouldn’t like his food mill used for grinding fish. Sam can eat a puree of dried fish and fish oil in a few weeks, I checked. NO more bottle feeding 6 times a day. Glad I still have a bunch of dried fish left.” Jim walked in with a gallon of Cod Liver Oil, and he was glad to be rid of it. He wondered how long the plane would smell of fish. When Jim finished unloading the plane, he held Ron again for a while, then he had to get going, he had a bunch of deliveries to do.

When they unpacked everything, there was a note stating that Jim didn’t charge them a shipping fee since he wanted to see his grandkid anyway. The extra case of diapers was a gift as well. Roy counted, and sure enough, there was an extra case of diapers. Jim also delivered a 5 gallon container of old avgas and oil mixture they couldn’t use in the planes, and a 5 gallon galvanized bucket with a note to burn the diapers and scatter the ashes since the diapers didn’t decompose well. Roy thought that was a good idea, and moved the galvanized bucket to the trash pile, and stuck the plastic bags full of diapers in the burn bin. It was already full enough to burn, so he added a cup of the fuel mixture to the barrel, and tossed a lit match into the barrel after moving the fuel can to the other side of the cabin. The fuel mixture burned the trash very effectively and completely. The trash pile smelled better too.

Roy went back inside and fed Sam again. He was feeling much better, and sucked down an entire bottle of formula in a couple of minutes. After Roy took him outside, gave him a fresh hot water bottle, and he curled up and went to sleep.

Chapter 51 - Through the Fire

Six months later, Roy was amazed they had survived the last 6 months. Ron and Sam were demanding, and needed to be fed regularly. Roy and Anne slept when they could. Finally, Ron started sleeping regularly, and Sam was weaned off the bottle, and now ate a stinky mixture of ground fish and cod liver oil alternating with the formula in a bowl. Ron had transformed from a helpless infant into a demanding baby. His cries said “I want it NOW.” and Anne got pretty good at “guess what’s wrong with the baby”. Sam was much easier to handle, except for a couple of mistakes house training him. Eventually Sam just stood next to the door and whined when he needed to go, and Roy took the hint. Sometimes Roy wondered who was training whom. Sam became a playful puppy, and Roy had to be careful of his teeth, which had grown in nicely. In another month or two, Sam could handle fresh meat, and that meant that Roy would have to go hunting or fishing. Roy would rather go fishing, since it was a lot closer, and their pantry was still well stocked with meat. They got a fresh shipment of staples when Jim came over to visit once a month. He said he wished he could come over more often, but Bill was still restricting flights since they didn’t have a reliable source of fuel yet, and were relying on the good graces of the US military to fly fuel in. In a real emergency a C-130 could LAPES in fuel bladders, but it was risky and expensive. Jim gave them a 5-gallon jug of waste fuel each month, and took the empty fuel can back with him. Roy was grateful since Ron’s diapers were now getting really stinky. Roy added Sam’s piles to the burn can before he burned it, and killed 2 birds with one stone. He made sure to leave a sample out so Sam could remember the spot.

Sam had outgrown his roly-poly puppy stage, and was looking more like a wolf every day. They played every day, and Jim brought Sam a present on one of his flights - a large piece of manila rope about 3 feet long with knots in each end so they could play “tug of war” or fetch. Roy enjoyed being able to play with Sam, since Oliver wasn’t the playing type. Sam and Ron also became fast friends. Anne was worried, but Roy knew that Sam had habituated to people, and had accepted them as his mom & dad, and Ron as his pack mate. When Sam was big enough to go on long walks, Roy took Sam fishing. Sam drank deeply from the lake, and took a doggy nap while Roy brought him dinner. 15 minutes later, Roy dropped a large lake trout in front of Sam. Eventually Sam tired of playing with his food and recognizing the smell, bit into the belly of the fish and ate it. When he was done eating, his little belly was so full that he didn’t want to walk home, so they lay there on the beach next to a blazing fire while Roy cooked his dinner. Sam really liked getting scratched behind the ears, and getting his belly rubbed. When Roy had finished eating, Sam felt better, and they walked home together. Sam still stuck close to Roy and hadn’t developed his adventurous streak yet.

Roy developed a pattern of feed Sam in the morning, burn the diapers and doggy pile, check the garden and water it, then take Sam fishing. When he got home, Anne had dinner waiting. Ron was now to the toddler stage, and he bumped into everything until he got over

the wobbles. Soon he was chasing Sam around the house. Sam liked his naps, but liked playing with Ron too. Eventually they both got worn out and wound up sleeping together on the bearskin rug. Anne tolerated it, she was worried about all the germs until Roy pointed out the obvious, that Sam probably had fewer germs than Ron did. Jim brought all the vaccines for Sam and Ron with him when they were needed, so she wasn't too concerned, except for one day Sam jumped up and put his paws on Ron's shoulders, and knocked Ron on his butt, then stood over him licking his face. Anne almost lost it, but Roy was watching the proceedings, and recognized it as common wolf behavior. The fact that he was licking Ron's face was actually a submissive gesture. Anne took Roy's word for it, but was still nervous with a WOLF so close to her son. Finally Roy took Anne aside and explained a few things. 1) There is less than 1/10 of 1% genetic difference between *Canis Lupus* and *Canis Familiaris*, and the Domestic Dog is really a wolf in sheep's clothing, and looks different from their ancestors only due to extensive in-breeding for selective traits. Matter of fact, you can out-breed certain medium to large breeds like German Shepherds to the point that they resemble wolves again. Domestic Dogs are actually a case of arrested development, and never mature beyond what would be the teenage stage of a wolf.

Anne was mollified but still not convinced. Still she trusted Roy's judgment. Sam and Ron continued to play together. As Ron got older and better able to walk and eventually run, Sam and Ron were inseparable. When Ron was old enough, Anne and Roy took Sam and Ron hunting with them. Roy bought a large 6-man tent to have enough room for the family to all sleep together. This of course included Sam, over Anne's objections until Roy pointed out that he slept better with Sam nearby and Ron practically curled up with Sam every night. Anne knew when she was beat, and relented. Anne hated it, but decided it was for Ron's own safety, so she attached a "kid leash" to the back of his overalls to keep him within 15 feet. She said that she felt like she had a dog on a leash, and Roy gave her "the look", so that was the end of the discussion. Anne made sure to protect Ron's ears when Roy was going to shoot, so he didn't associate guns with painful noises.

Sam was now an Adult dog, and had been reunited with Francine and Oliver, but preferred the company of Ron, besides Roy fed him a big fish every day. Sam grew to become very protective of his adopted family, and alerted Roy to several bears, which either made a hasty exit, or wound up as a bearskin rug. Sam had even learned to play "fetch". As Ron got older, Anne didn't need the leash anymore, since he had learned to stay within sight of his parents at all times. Anne was very grateful when Ron finally outgrew diapers. Ron and Anne decided that one kid was quite enough, and they concentrated all their energies on raising Ron. Anne bought all the educational books she needed, and started homeschooling Ron as soon as he was out of diapers. As a result, his standardized test scores were way ahead of his age group. By age 6 he could read and write. While it wasn't Shakespeare, it was really good for a 6 year old. Anne spent several hours each day teaching Ron everything she could. He absorbed information like a sponge. Roy and Anne taught Ron to love and respect nature, and taught him about the God that created it all. Ron was full of questions, which Roy and Anne answered to the best of their ability. It was soon obvious

that Ron would do better with a computer, so Roy bought a new laptop, and bought enough solar panels and deep cycle batteries to keep it running. Internet access was too expensive, so they decided to wait until later. They bought all kinds of educational software including the entire Encyclopedia Britannica on CD-ROM

Roy taught Ron all about living in the wilderness, and how to survive in the wilds. He debated telling Ron his story, and decided to wait until Ron was bigger. Grandpa Jim still came over once a month to spoil Ron rotten. He gave Ron his first knife, a Swiss Army knife - the Hiker model. Ron cherished it, and learned to use it properly. As he got older, Roy taught him how to use the emergency gear, and for his tenth birthday, gave him his very own fanny pack emergency kit. He was still too young to carry a gun, but Roy got him started with a Czech single-shot .22 target rifle. It seemed that Ron took after Anne's side of the family, and took to shooting like a duck to water. He was soon hitting empty soup cans at 100 yds with open sights.

By now, they had a resident wolf population, and Oliver was getting long in the tooth. One day he showed up at Roy's door, and Roy understood Oliver's time was up, and Oliver wanted to say goodbye to his best friend. Roy spent the rest of the day with Oliver by the lake, and the next morning when they got up, Oliver was lying by their door, dead. Roy grieved as though he had lost his best friend (he had) and carried his body to a shady spot near the cabin and dug a deep hole to bury his friend. The entire family went to the graveside when Roy buried Oliver. Roy read "The Rainbow Bridge" and everyone was crying. Ron and Sam only understood that Roy was sad. Anne did her best to comfort her husband, but she was pretty broken up too. The first generation of pups had spread out and established their own families, and the second and third generations were spreading out too. Sam's siblings stayed close to home, and the mournful howling of wolves that night sent chills up Roy's spine, almost like they were grieving for their father as well.

Francine followed her mate a few years later, and Roy buried her right beside her mate. He didn't grieve for her, but was sad to see her go. Sam recognized the body of his mother, and it took several days to get him back to normal.

For Ron's 12th birthday, Roy called his gunsmith, and he had another Ruger 22/45 with a suppressor in stock. Seems some Liberal East Coast City fathers had decided that suppressors were evil, and made their Animal Control officers get rid of them. The gunsmith picked them up for a song, rebuilt them, and sold most of them. He delivered the gun with a shoulder holster and 5,000 rounds of CCI Mini-Mag .22 ammo in time for Ron's birthday. Anne was OK with Ron having a suppressed pistol since they were in the middle of nowhere, and it was much cheaper to practice with a .22 and he didn't need to use hearing protection. Grandpa Jim flew up for Ron's 12th birthday party, and surprised him with a Kabar knife in a Sheathmechanic Kydex Sheath with a piggybacked pouch. The big surprise was when Ron opened the present from his parents. His eyes got as big as saucers, and he gave his Mom and Dad a big hug, then strapped on the shoulder holster. Roy adjusted it for

him, but admonished him not to wear guns in the house, so he left the 22/45 in the box. They carried it outside, and Ron brought a bunch of cans they were saving for this occasion, and set them from 20 feet to 25 yards off their back porch. Mom & Dad put on their holsters too, and as soon as they were ready, Ron carefully loaded all 4 of his magazines, pointed the gun downrange, and loaded the gun, then proceeded to go 10/10 at the soup cans that were 20 feet away. He reloaded with the other mag, and tried cans further out. Soon he was hitting cans 25 yards away regularly. When he had to reload, Mom got into the act, and went 8/10 at 25 yards. Finally Roy, the admitted pistol shooting champion of the family, went 10/10 at 25 yards. Even Jim gave it a try, and his ear to ear grin said it all. He'd have to see if he could get one too. One thing he did know, is every time he came up, he was going to bring another 5,000 rounds of CCI Mini-Mags.

Roy gave Jim the phone number of his gunsmith, and soon Jim had a suppressed 22/45 as well. They spent time shooting every time Jim made a trip up to the cabin. Since they had finally solved the fuel delivery problem (smaller planes and more frequent deliveries) Jim was able to come up to their cabin at least once a month. Ron continued to grow up, and Sam was getting noticeably older. One day Ron asked his Dad "Is Sam going to die?"

"Ron, everything dies, but the good news is when we die, we go to be with Jesus in Heaven. I believe that when we get there, we will be reunited with everyone we love. I'm sure Oliver is there waiting for me. Remember "The Rainbow Bridge" I read at Oliver's funeral?"

"Dad, I don't want Sam to go - I'll miss him."

"I know son, I still miss Oliver. But just remember, it's not "goodbye" it's "See You Later." OK, Ron."

Ron was trying not to cry, and Roy decided his son needed a big hug. Father and son wound up crying together. When they were finished Roy told his son "Don't ever be afraid to cry. There are some times it's not a good idea, but when things really hurt, just let it out. It takes a real man to be able to cry unashamedly."

Chapter 52 - First Caribou

That fall, Ron was old enough to go hunting with Roy, so Anne spent that summer teaching Ron marksmanship with her Browning A-Bolt BOSS .308 rifle. By the end of the summer, Ron could out-shoot his Dad, and was fast approaching his Mom. He just needed more experience in range estimation and figuring the wind. Anything within 300 yards was in big trouble. Roy explained to Ron why they needed to hunt, and you never hunted for a “trophy” only when you had to eat, and then you used every part of the animal you could. That was the way the Indians did things. He didn’t agree with everything the Indians did, but using every part of the animal made sense since you didn’t waste a valuable animal. Ron was looking forward to shooting his first Caribou, since it was considered a rite of passage in Alaska. Roy had decided that Ron was old and mature enough to have his own set of knives. While he liked his Mom’s skinner, he agreed that if you could only have 2 knives, then the <skip> combo made sense, since you didn’t need to carry a separate hatchet. Roy contacted his knife maker, and 3 months later, Ron had his very own knives just like his Dad’s. When he got them, Roy sat Ron down and told him how he had used his knives just like Ron’s to survive that year when he was stranded. When he realized who Ron was, he wanted to run up and give his Mom a big hug, but first he wanted to visit Ron’s grave, so they packed up their kits and started walking toward the lake. Roy kept a wary eye out for bears, Ron didn’t have a .44 Magnum yet because he was too small to handle the recoil. It was still early in the season, and Sam was with them, so he wasn’t too worried. Roy hoped that Sam would last for one last hunt, because Ron and Sam had gotten really close in the last couple of years. It really wasn’t fair, just as they got old enough to really enjoy each other, the canine part of the team grew old and died.

When they reached Ron’s gravesite, Roy explained how Ron was a really well-known bush pilot, probably one of the best in the area. He got lost in the clouds, hit an air pocket and never recovered. About a week after Roy pulled himself out of the wreckage, he found Ron’s body and buried it there. He told Ron how he used the knife and <skip> to survive until he found the black powder rifle. He told his son how he fought off a bear with just a black powder rifle, and the knives. Ron looked at his dad in a different light - he was just like the mountain men he read about in his books. Then he noticed for the first time his dad was wearing buckskins, well technically Caribou skins, but it was the same idea. When he shot his caribou, he wondered if his Mom would make him a set of buckskins out of the skin. Ron asked his Dad, who told him that if there were enough hide left, depending on how good a job Ron did skinning and tanning the hide, they’d see. Ron now knew the ball was totally in his court, if he wanted a set of buckskins, he’d have to shoot an animal that was large enough, and he’d have to put the bullet in a spot that wouldn’t ruin the hide, and he’d have to be careful skinning and tanning it, just like his dad had to do to survive. He understood this was a test, but also a learning experience. He knew his Dad couldn’t realistically put him in a life and death survival situation, but he could let him experience the pressures. Ron looked at the grave of his namesake without any significant feelings, then

turned around to leave. Roy stayed for a while, remembering all that had happened to him over the years. He was definitely getting older, and was facing Eternity. He hoped he had the time to pass on his knowledge and experience to his son, but was OK if God decided to take him before then.

They walked back to the cabin, and Roy decided to turn it into a learning experience for Ron, asking him which plants around him were good to eat, and which weren't, and how he would build stuff with only the tools on him right now. That one stopped Ron right in his tracks. He realized he hadn't spent enough time studying Primitive construction techniques. He told Roy that he hadn't seen anything about that. Roy realized it was time they got Internet access for Ron. Satellite DSL connections were expensive, but he had the money to burn now. His investments had paid off, and Anne's savings had matured and virtually doubled since they had been married. They lived off the interest for years without touching the principal, and reinvested all the returns they didn't spend on their simple lifestyle. When he got back to the cabin, he was going to call Bill and have him set it up.

A couple of weeks later, Jim and Bill flew up to their cabin to install the Satellite DSL connection. They drove a pole into the ground, and using the instructions, set the azimuth and elevation of the dish, then connected the dish to the satellite receiver, and the receiver to the laptop. Ron loaded the software, and was soon surfing the Internet. One of the first things he did was a Google search for "Primitive Survival" and got pages and pages of websites. He visited each, and bookmarked the ones he liked. He ran across a funny site called the Frugal Squirrel - he thought the Squirrel "Nutz" looked funny. Anne didn't approve, but didn't say anything. At least he wasn't looking at Playboy. He found the Plainsman's Cabin, and several other websites. Then he located several sites about flintknapping, and how to make clay pots, soap, bow and arrow, and primitive gunpowder. He asked his dad about those sites, and Roy told him before he left, he spent over a year surfing the internet to update all his knowledge from his days as a Boy Scout.

He showed Ron the site on Blackpowder Rifles that had all the information on his .54 caliber Hawkins rifle. Ron asked if he could shoot it, and Roy had to explain that the recoil was almost twice as severe as the BOSS .308 since there was no muzzle brake. Ron's eyes got as big as saucers - he thought the .308 was bad. Then remembering was his mom told him "Recoil is Relative" - meaning that in the heat of the moment you might not feel the recoil, but your shoulder would remind you later. He liked shooting the .308 and hitting targets out to 400 yards. He still couldn't figure out how his mom shot groups half the size of his - She was OLD. Then he thought that maybe being experienced had something to do with it, after all she had been shooting for almost 30 years now. His dad was no slouch, but couldn't compete at 400 yards. Anne explained that men have too much fast twitch muscle and not enough slow twitch, which makes them jittery, but better pistol shots since speed is a priority in pistol shooting. It wasn't who shot first, it was who shot first with a lethal round, even though a disabling round could end a fight. Ron liked shooting his .22 pistol, and couldn't wait to shoot the cannons his mom and dad had. His mom explained that he needed to be

much bigger and stronger, especially upper body strength to be able to safely shoot a .44 Magnum. He had started volunteering to help his dad haul and split wood to build upper body strength. He figured by his 15th birthday he might be able to do it. Roy was glad for the help, he was getting older and didn't have the stamina he once had. He'd celebrated his 65th birthday a few years back. He felt weird being a senior citizen with a teenage son. Ron helped his dad more and more with the chores as his dad slowed down. Ron understood on a primal level that his dad was getting older, but didn't want to think about it too much - he was having too much fun with him as a fishing buddy. Old Sam was really starting to slow down, he wasn't a puppy any more, and his muzzle was turning white.

Finally, hunting season arrived. Anne put in a big order for canning jars, and Teriyaki seasoning a few weeks before. The entire family went hunting this time, as they had done the last couple of years, except Anne and Roy were now sleeping on air mattresses. Ron pushed the cart since he was in the best condition. His dad would help him get it home, since it was still too heavy with 3 caribou on it for him to pull by himself. Ron had the rifle slung over his shoulder. Anne and Roy carried their shoulder holsters, and Anne carried the other rifle, since they wanted Roy to have his hands free in case they met up with a bear. Sam walked beside them. He used to trot, now he just walked like he was tired. When they reached their first campsite, Sam plopped down and didn't move. Ron and Roy set up the tent, then caught dinner in the stream. Anne gave Sam a big bowl of water, and refilled it 3 times. When Ron had caught gutted, and cleaned the fish, Sam ate the leftovers, and a few pieces tossed to him by Ron. They all piled into the tent and went to sleep.

They were up at first light, and Ron was eager to get to the Caribou hunting grounds, so he helped his dad pack everything up and get ready. They started walking toward the Caribou grounds. They weren't even interested in the Moose, and weren't disappointed when they came to the empty moose hollow. An hour later, they were climbing the little hill next to the Caribou hunting area. Roy stopped Ron and told him they were getting close, so he'd take the cart so that Ron would have the best chance at a shot without tired arms. When they reached the grove of trees, they set the cart and everything else down. The four of them snuck up on the herd of Caribou who were feeding in the field of lush green grass without a care in the world. Roy quietly laid out a tarp for them to lie on, and Roy and Ron extended the bipods on their rifles, and lay down prone. Roy made sure everyone had their earplugs in, and Ron selected a big bull, but not the prime bull to shoot. Roy decided to nail a couple of his buddies, and they made plans. Ron would shoot first so the noise of Roy firing wouldn't disturb Ron or spook the Caribou and possibly blow Ron's shot. With that, they both locked and loaded, and Ron concentrated on the neck/shoulder region of his bull. He wanted his first bull to be a perfect shot. As the crosshairs of the scope settled on the spot Ron wanted the bullet to hit, he cleared the safety, and the trigger broke without him remembering touching it. The gun roared, and when the smoke cleared, the Caribou went down in a heap without moving a step. Roy quickly shot the other 2 bulls, but wasn't as picky about where he shot them, and nailed them both with a heart/lung shot. All 3 bulls were down, and when they had safed their guns, Roy gave Ron a hug and a "attaboy". Anne

hugged her son, and told him it looked like a perfect shot from where she was. Ron picked up the cart, and walked it over to the bulls. Looking at his bull, it was clear his shot had severed the spinal column right above the shoulders - exactly where he aimed, even though the estimated 200 yards was a chip shot for him. He didn't realize that almost half the deer hunters in the USA couldn't have made that shot. Roy told Ron to go ahead and butcher the bull himself. He'd be right over at the other bulls if he had any questions. Ron tried, but wasn't as experienced as his dad, and made a mess of the bull. He did manage to get the skin off in one piece, but his butchering techniques looked more like a scene from The Texas Chainsaw Massacre than the work of a professional butcher. Good thing Sam was good and hungry. Roy finished first, and he and Anne got the tent up and the fire started. By the time Ron had the skin off and the meat quartered and in bags, it was getting dark. Roy had 3 large pieces of meat broiling over the fire, and Sam was pigging out eating everything they didn't want from the caribou. Ron walked up to the fire exhausted. He asked his Dad if it were OK to brain tan the skin tomorrow. "Dad, I didn't know that would be so much work."

Roy told him "Don't worry, it gets easier with experience. It's also easier with a real skinning knife instead of the <skip> you have. Next time you're with us, borrow your mom's skinner until you have more experience. The Ulu works great, but takes a longer time to learn how to use."

The next morning, Ron had an easier time brain tanning the caribou hide, but he agreed with his mom that it was really stinky. As soon as Ron had brain tanned the hide, and washed his hands, they packed up to leave. Sam was a smart wolf and didn't pig out to the point where he couldn't walk, and staggered behind them when Ron picked up the handles of the cart, and slug the straps over his shoulders. Groaning with the effort, he tried to get it moving by himself. Seeing his difficulty, Roy got behind and pushed, and they got it started. Roy helped him all the way up the hill. Ron managed to get it down the hill safely, and when they were on flat ground was barely able to manage by himself. They weren't setting any speed records, but Sam wasn't exactly moving all that fast either. They made it to their other campground just before dark. Ron and Sam were so dog-tired they just collapsed in place, Sam's head on Ron's lap - his favorite spot. Anne and Roy got the tent up by themselves, and caught dinner. The smell of frying fish woke Ron and Sam up enough to eat and they each drank almost a half gallon of water. They staggered into the tent and collapsed in the corner. Anne and Roy took the time to blow up their air mattresses and unroll their sleeping bags.

They got up at first light the next morning. Ron was stiff and sore, but he had to pick up the cart and drag it home. Roy helped as much as he could. Sam just managed to put one paw in front of another. Later that afternoon, they arrived at the cabin, and Ron dropped the cart, walked inside, and plopped down on his bed in the second room. Sam managed to walk slowly into the cabin and lay down on the bearskin rug next to Ron's bed. Roy decided now would not be the time to yell at Ron, maybe making him pull the cart was a bit too much, but he wasn't in good enough shape to do it any more. Admitting that he was getting old was

hard to do. He and Anne hung the meat in the smokehouse for now, they could jerk and can the meat tomorrow. Roy unrolled the skins and spread them over the smokehouse roof. Anne was too tired to cook, and Roy wasn't that hungry. They got undressed and sank into their bed. "Anne, I hate to admit this, but I'm getting too old to do this, and Ron is too small to haul that load home all by himself. Is there anything we could do?"

"How about a double harness, with Ron lifting and both of you pulling, it might be easier, kind of like the traces for a sled."

"Now I know why I married you - you're so smart."

"And I thought it was just for my looks."

Anne and Roy held each other then went to sleep.

The next morning, Anne made breakfast, and then the three of them starting the canning and jerking process. Anne was an old hand at canning by now, and Roy knew just how big to make the pieces. Ron watched and helped where he could. The kitchen was too small to get more than 1 person near the stove at a time. Roy asked Ron to take the skins down off the smokehouse and take them out to the lake and wash them. He reminded him to bring his fanny pack and shoulder holster, and to take Sam with him.

Halfway to the lake, Sam alerted. As Ron turned to find out what Sam was worried about, a huge bear charged. Instinctively, Sam charged to defend Ron. Ron dropped the caribou skins he was carrying and drew his Ruger 22/45. A .22 pistol isn't much against a bear, but it was all he had. He had 3 15-round magazines loaded, maybe he'd get a lucky shot. Sam tangled with the bear, snapping and snarling about 30 feet away from Ron, who was trying to get a clean shot at the bear's head. Every time a vulnerable part of the bear appeared, he squeezed the trigger. He managed to score with each bullet, it's just that they weren't doing much damage. He emptied his first magazine, and loaded the second one, and kept firing. Finally the second to the last round of the second mag managed to hit something vital, and the Bear roared in pain. By now Sam had multiple wounds, and was bleeding out almost as fast as the bear. The bear still wasn't down, so Ron kept shooting. Finally when he was almost out of ammo, the bear fell over and didn't get back up. Ron ran over to Sam who was bleeding on the ground, and scooped him up and ran back to the cabin, yelling at the top of his lungs for his parents. Right as he got to the cabin, Sam died in his arms.

"NOOOOO. Don't Die."

Roy and Anne came running when they heard Ron scream right outside their door. Roy had his Colt Anaconda out. As soon as they saw Ron and Sam they knew what had happened. When he stopped crying, Ron told his Dad that Sam had died protecting him from a bear. Anne checked Ron all over, and there wasn't a scratch on him.

Roy sat Ron down and asked him if he wanted to be alone with Sam for a while, or if he wanted to bury him now.

“Dad, can I be alone with him for a while?”

“Sure son, we’ll be right inside if you need us.”

Roy and Anne went inside and started praying.

Meanwhile Ron was talking to Sam “Thank You Sam. I don’t know if you can hear me, but you saved my life. I’ll always love you. Bye for now.”

Ron held Sam’s lifeless body in his arms and cried a while, remembering all the happy times they had together, remembering when they used to play and run around when Sam was still a puppy.

Later that evening, Ron dug a grave next to Oliver and Francine for Sam. He made a wooden grave marker for Sam that said:

SAM
JN 15:13
Greater love hath no man than this,
that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Roy led the memorial service, and He read the 23rd Psalm:

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters.
3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake.
4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over.
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever.
(NKJV)

When he finished, Anne read “The Rainbow Bridge”

“Just this side of heaven is a place called Rainbow Bridge. When an animal dies that has been especially close to someone here, that pet goes to Rainbow Bridge. There are meadows and hills for all of our special friends so they can run and play together. There is plenty of food, water and sunshine, and our friends are warm and comfortable.

All the animals who had been ill and old are restored to health and vigor. Those who were hurt or maimed are made whole and strong again, just as we remember them in our dreams of days and times gone by. The animals are happy and content, except for one small thing; they each miss someone very special to them, who had to be left behind.

They all run and play together, but the day comes when one suddenly stops and looks into the distance. His bright eyes are intent. His eager body quivers. Suddenly he begins to run from the group, flying over the green grass, his legs carrying him faster and faster.

You have been spotted, and when you and your special friend finally meet, you cling together in joyous reunion, never to be parted again. The happy kisses rain upon your face; your hands again caress the beloved head, and you look once more into the trusting eyes of your pet, so long gone from your life but never absent from your heart.

Then you cross Rainbow Bridge together.... “

Author unknown...

They cried together a while, and finally Ron picked up the shovel and started burying Sam's body.

When the sun was about to set, they heard a Wolf pack howling in the distance. It seemed a fitting sendoff to one of their own.

The next morning, Roy and Ron walked over to check the bear and retrieve the caribou skins.

Roy turned the bear's body over, and counted over 30 .22 bullet holes in the chest, and several scars where rounds had just missed the eyes. Roy was impressed that his son would have enough courage to face a bear armed with a .22 pistol.

“Ron, why were you trying to kill the bear instead of running away to safety?”

“I had to protect Sam. If I got a lucky shot and killed the bear sooner, Sam might have lived.”

“Ron there was nothing you could do with a .22 to kill a bear at close range fast enough that Sam wouldn't have died from his injuries. His Daddy, Oliver got mauled by a bear within 100 feet of the cabin, and barely made it back in time for Anne to sew him up and stop the bleeding. We're almost ¼ mile away from the cabin - that's 4 times as far, and you'd have to carry Sam. Unless your first shot killed the bear, which is a million to one shot with a .22, there would have been no way you could have saved Sam. Sam was doing what brave dogs and wolves have always done, defended their families even if it meant their death. I'm sure Sam might have known he might die, but chose to defend you instead of running away. YOU chose to defend him instead of running away. In my book, you're both heroes.” Roy gave Ron a big hug, picked up the skins, and carried them to the lake to wash them off.

When they were finished, Roy said “I'm going to have to talk to that gunsmith about getting you something bigger than that .22. I'm not sure if you can handle the .44 Magnum yet, and I

don't want you to injure yourself trying, but maybe a .357 Magnum might work - at least it's better than a .22."

When they got back, Roy called Bill. Jim was there, and Roy asked them if there was good revolver a 13-yr old could shoot that might work on bears. Jim's voice went up an octave when he asked Roy what Ron needed a gun for bears for. Roy told them the whole story, including the death of Sam and how Ron faced a full-grown bear with only a Ruger .22 pistol. Roy told them he wanted to get Ron a .44 Magnum, but wasn't sure he could handle the recoil. Bill said he'd call the gunsmith and see what he said.

Half an hour later, Bill was on the radio. "Roy, the gunsmith said the .44 Magnum is the minimum handgun he'd recommend for bear up there. He said that in order for a .357 Magnum to have a chance at killing a bear, it would need to be loaded to +p+ levels, and the felt recoil would be in the same ballpark as a .44 Magnum. Since the Colt Anaconda is heavier than most Ruger .357's, the weight would help control the recoil. Anyway, he said to let Ron try to shoot it under controlled conditions, and see if he can learn to handle it - he was going to make up a lot of "Light" rounds so Ron could work his way up to the big full-house rounds. Jim and I will be up later this week with the ammo."

Roy turned to Ron. "OK son, the Gunsmith said it was the .44 Magnum or Stay on the porch, so it's time you learned how to shoot one of these. Grandpa Jim said they'd be up later this week with some practice ammo for you, so you can get used to the recoil before you have to handle the full-house rounds. OK."

"Cool Dad. I always wanted to shoot those Hand Cannons you and Mom have."

Later that week, Jim and Bill showed up with 200 rounds of the .44 Magnum Lite rounds. Anne broke out the plugs and muffs to keep everyone's hearing intact, and Roy rolled a 12" diameter log about 20 yards out in front of the cabin. He figured that would be far enough to make Ron concentrate on the sights and not rush it. Everyone put on their eye and ear protection, then Roy showed Ron how to load and shoot his Colt Anaconda. He opened the crane release, pushed out the cylinder, pushed the ejector and dumped the rounds into his hand. He handed his son the unloaded and open gun with the barrel pointed down range. Ron carefully took the gun by the grip, making sure the barrel was still pointed downrange, and opened a box of the .44 Magnum Lite ammo the gunsmith marked "open first" They were about 75% of factory spec ammo. Ron carefully loaded and closed the cylinder, kept the barrel down range, and took a firm two-handed grip just like his dad had taught him. He looked left and right to make sure the range was clear, then sighted the center of the log, and like his Dad had showed him, thumbed back the hammer with his non-trigger hand until the hammer was at full-cock while keeping his finger off the trigger. When the hammer was back, he moved his finger carefully to the trigger, took a couple of deep breaths, and held the 3rd one, and squeezed the trigger. The Anaconda roared, and when the smoke had cleared, there was a huge hole in the center of the log. Roy was watching the barrel, and while it went higher than he liked, it wasn't unsafe, and

Ron had an ear-to-ear grin on his face. He brought the gun down out of recoil, cocked the hammer, and triggered off a second round, that hit within an inch of the first. He shot the rest of the cylinder exactly like that, and all 6 rounds were within an inch of each other.

To say that Roy was impressed was an understatement. His best group at 20 yards was 2-3 inches. Then he remembered Ron wasn't shooting the hot rounds yet. Ron put 50 rounds down range into the center of the log before his wrists got tired. When they finished Roy asked the dumbest question of his life "Ron, would you want a Colt Anaconda just like mine?" Ron practically squeezed the breath out of his dad when he hugged him.

"I'll take that as a YES. Bill, when you get back to Allakaket, call my gunsmith and order another Anaconda and the special holster."

Bill had a surprise for him. Out in Jim's plane was a big box from the gunsmith. In it was a Colt Anaconda he had in stock, and the double shoulder holster, adjusted to fit Ron. when Ron opened the Box, his eyes lit up like Christmas had come early. "I don't know what to say, except thanks everyone." Ron put on the shoulder holster, put the Ruger 22/45 on the right side and the Colt Anaconda on the left since the holsters were set up for vertical cross-draw. Roy opened up a box of the Hot .44 Magnum rounds, and Ron loaded the gun and stuck it in the holster, then loaded the 2 speed loaders included.

Jim told them they had another surprise, but they needed to get into the plane. Roy told Ron he'd have to leave the guns behind, since he wasn't legally old enough to go armed into town. Ron frowned, but did as his father asked, and put the shoulder holster in the box, and set it on the kitchen table. Anne came out with jackets for everyone - typical Mom. They all boarded Jim's plane. It was a tight squeeze, but they made it, and they taxied and took off. Everyone was pretty quiet on the flight to Allakaket except Ron - this was his first plane ride, and Roy was playing Tour Guide. Half an hour later they landed at Allakaket, and got into Bill's SUV. They drove through town, and stopped at a house on the other side of town. No sooner had they got out, then they were mobbed by Husky puppies. Jim answered the unasked question when he told Ron to pick one to take home with him. Ron was having too much fun playing with the puppies to chose, but soon the choice was self-evident when one of the males jumped onto his lap and started licking his face. "I guess I'll take this one. Does he have a name?"

"Nope, that's your job." The male he had chosen was a beautiful black and white mixed coat with blue eyes just like Sam. Ron was halfway tempted to call him Sam, but thought better of it.

"How about Lucky?"

"OK, Lucky it is. Do you want to stay in town and have dinner at the lodge, or do you want to get back home?"

Ron spoke up “If it’s all the same to you Grandpa Jim, I’d just as soon get home and play with Lucky.”

They all got back in Bill’s car and drove to the plane. Bill stayed in Allakaket, so there was much more room. Jim offered to let Ron sit in front. Ron bounded right up and into the front seat, keeping a good hold on Lucky’s collar. As soon as they were in and belted, Jim fired up the motor, and soon they were taxiing out to the lake and took off. The view from the front was spectacular, and Ron forgot all about his puppy for the rest of the trip as he marveled at the view. The landing was as smooth as glass, and they taxied to their cabin. Jim stayed in the plane, and said he needed to get back before dark. Roy, Anne, Ron and Lucky got off the plane and headed to their cabin.

Chapter 53 - New Puppy

When they got home, Ron and Roy sat down for a minute. “Ron, Lucky is your dog, you are totally responsible for him. You need to feed, water and clean up after him. My first suggestion would be to get him housetrained ASAP to keep your mom happy. Luckily he’s weaned, so you won’t have to hand feed him like I did with Sam. You don’t remember, but Francine dropped Sam on our doorstep as a puppy because he was the runt and she didn’t have enough milk for all the pups. I ended up hand-feeding him a bottle every 3-4 hours for 3 months until he could eat solid food. Anne was feeding you every 3-4 hours too, but she could at least feed you while she lay down. I think she fell asleep a couple of times when you were nursing. Good thing she didn’t roll over in her sleep.”

“Gross Dad. That was a little more information than I needed.” (Ron was still at the “Girls are Gross” stage) Ron walked over and picked up Lucky. He was heavier than he thought, and almost dropped him until he got a better grip under his butt. He carried Lucky inside and sat him on the bearskin rug next to his bed. He sniffed around and burrowed into the bearskin, then promptly fell asleep. The next morning, Ron picked Lucky up and carried him outside. As soon as he set him down near where Sam used to go, he immediately dropped a puppy pile and peed. Ron praised Lucky, then picked him back up and carried him inside. He set Lucky back on the bearskin, then opened the bag of Puppy chow and gave Lucky a cupful with some warm water. Lucky chowed down, and ate it all in a matter of minutes. Ron filled a small bowl with cold clean water, and left it next to the food. Lucky lapped at the water experimentally, then sat there lapping up the water until the bowl was empty. Ron gave him another bowl of water, then figured he had better take Lucky outside just in case. Ron’s timing was perfect, because Lucky let go with a huge stream of pee as soon as he was in Sam’s old spot. When he finished, Ron said “Good Boy” and petted Lucky for a while, then carried him back inside the cabin. By then Anne had breakfast ready for them. Ron put Lucky down on the bearskin and washed his hands, then sat at the table to eat breakfast. Roy said grace, then they passed the plates of food.

Roy noticed Ron was eating more food than he was now - it was about time. At 13, Ron was about to hit his growth spurt and should shoot up 3-6 inches and gain 50-100 pounds. Roy was glad since he was not going to be able to do as much heavy work in a couple of years like he used to. He would still be able to instruct his son, but soon Ron would have to take over cutting firewood, the heavy labor parts of hunting and any repairs to the cabin that might need his strength. Anne was still homeschooling Ron, but part of the day was spent with his father outdoors learning stuff about survival, primitive techniques, hunting, fishing, and camping. Roy wanted to impart all of his knowledge to his son while he was able. Frankly he was glad that Ron was able to handle the .44 Magnum revolver. With the hand cannon, Ron could defend himself against anything out there he might run into. Lucky would need a couple of years growth and education before he would be able to protect Ron and the rest of the family if something like a bear decided to crash their party.

Later that day, Roy took inventory of their recently canned meat, and decided they needed to go hunting again, at the rate they were going through meat, there wasn't enough in the pantry for an emergency reserve. They needed 3 more large caribou before Roy would be satisfied. He talked to Anne, who said "Whatever you say dear."

Ron took the news a little better than Anne. His response was basically "Yippee." Ron loved to go camping and hunting. They spent the rest of the afternoon getting ready, and Ron remembered Lucky.

"Dad, what are we going to do with Lucky, he's too young to walk that far, and we can't leave him in the cabin by himself for 4 days."

"Son, we'll just have to bring him with us. Put him on the cart, and he'll get a free ride. Just make sure to bring enough puppy chow for him. Bring enough for a week just to be on the safe side, and both his bowls."

Roy watched Ron sharpen their knives using the DMT bench stones. The DMT diamond impregnated sharpening stones are one of the few sharpening stones that can sharpen ATS-34 steel knives, especially when coated with Titanium Nitride. Ron had it down to a science, and kept the same angle relative to the stone as he sharpened both sides. When he finished, Roy tested the edge by shaving hair on his forearm. Ron didn't have enough hair yet to test a knife this way, he had to drag a fingernail across the edge to get a sense of the sharpness. This was much more dangerous than shaving, since one slip, and there went your thumb. Next they cleaned, lubricated and re-loaded all their guns. Finally they checked the camping gear and cleaned the Camelback water carriers. They still brought the water filter, even though they didn't need it any more. There was no resident population of beavers, and they hadn't gotten sick from the local water in years. Anne made a hearty dinner, and Ron fed Lucky and took him outside. He came back in, and washed his hands for dinner. Roy said grace, and they passed the plates of food. When they were finished, Ron asked to be excused, and walked over to the bearskin to play with Lucky. They went to bed shortly after dinner so they could get up at first light to go hunting. Anne had been busy, and made a double harness for Roy and Ron. Roy was in front, in the "lead dog" position, with Ron in the rear holding the handles of the cart. This would take a little getting used to, but Anne thought it would work better than a side-by-side arrangement. They were individually attached to the cart, so Roy couldn't pull Ron over, and Ron couldn't cause Roy to trip if they didn't move together. Ron made sure he packed enough puppy chow for a week, both of Lucky's bowls, and a leash for Lucky if he felt like getting adventurous in camp. He also brought a much smaller piece of bearskin for Lucky to burrow into at night. When they were all packed, Roy told Ron "Goodnight Son, get some sleep, we'll be up at first light tomorrow." and went to bed.

Chapter 54 - Lucky's First Hunt

As usual, they all were up at first light. Anne made breakfast, and Ron fed Lucky, then took him for his morning constitutional. When he came back, Ron washed his hands, and sat down to eat breakfast. When they were finished eating, everyone cleaned up quickly, and Anne made sure the stove and fireplace were cold out. Ron and Roy packed everything quickly, and double checked everything. This time, Ron put his shoulder holster just like his dad's on too. He was proud to have a Colt Anaconda to help defend the family. They all put on their daybags and fanny packs as well. Ron carried the tent and some extra stuff for Lucky out to the cart, then picked up Lucky, clipped the leash to his collar, and set him on the cart. When Roy and Anne were ready to go, they set off at a fairly quick pace. Later that afternoon, they arrived at their campsite. Roy and Ron quickly made camp while Anne caught several brook trout for dinner. Ron fed Lucky and set him on his bearskin rug. Lucky didn't feel like exploring, and sat right next to Ron. Anne cleaned and cooked the fish while Ron and Roy finished setting up camp, then the set down to eat dinner. After dinner, Roy blew up the air mattresses, and unrolled the sleeping bags. Before it got totally dark, Ron took Lucky over to a nearby tree, downwind from their campsite to take care of business. Lucky relieved himself, and then followed Ron back to camp. He gave Ron no trouble on the leash, and naturally heeled right next to Ron. Lucky lay down next to Ron on his bearskin rug and was soon fast asleep.

They were up at first light as usual. Ron fed Lucky and led him over to the same tree. Since they were in a hurry, they ate jerky, and Ron put Lucky's food and water bowls on the cart. Lucky ate breakfast on the move. They made excellent time, and were soon at the Caribou hunting grounds. Lucky had shown no inclination to bark, and Ron hoped their luck would hold. Roy laid a tarp down at the same spot as last time, then Ron and Roy got ready to shoot while Anne kept a firm hold on Lucky. She thought he might startle from the loud noises. Roy and Ron selected 3 large bulls like before, but they were farther away this time, so Ron decided to get the guaranteed kill shot and aimed for the heart-lung region, it was a much larger target than the spine. Ron shot first, and his bull dropped, then Roy fired 2 quick shots to drop the other bulls. Lucky didn't make a sound, he just whined a little when the first rifle shot went off. Ron picked up the cart and wheeled it over to the bulls, and this time he borrowed Anne's skinner. Roy was right, it was much easier to use than his <skip>. It took half as much time this time to skin and gut the caribou. They left everything they didn't want for the scavengers since Lucky was too young to eat the leftovers. Ron had his bull quartered and in bags just when Roy was finishing the second bull. Since it was too late to make it back to the other campsite, Anne took the time to start making camp, and Roy helped her get the tent up when he finished. Ron ended up with the messy job of brain tanning all 3 hides. Lucky investigated the goings-on and decided that it smelled much better in camp, and beat a hasty retreat.

When he was finished, Ron made sure to thoroughly wash his hands and the knives. As before, Roy had 3 large pieces of Caribou roasting over the fire when Ron got finished.

“Ron, I’m proud of you Son. You did a much better job this time, and if you notice, you also did it quicker than last time.”

“Dad, you were right, Mom’s skinner is much easier to use than the <skip>, but I still think the <skip> combo is worth being slower and more difficult to use as a skinner, since you can’t chop wood with the skinner.”

“Smart observation Son. What do you say let’s eat and hit the sack, I want to get an early start.”

They ate dinner and Ron took Lucky about 20 yards downwind of camp to take care of business. Lucky curled up next to Ron and was soon fast asleep.

The next morning, they got up and dressed, and Lucky made a pit stop. Roy handed everyone a piece of jerky, and Lucky got fed on the cart again. Ron picked up the cart, and Roy slipped into a sling to help pull the cart, so they were able to go much faster. Later that afternoon, they reached the cabin, and Ron and Roy started hanging the meat, and they would can it tomorrow. Ron took Lucky over to his spot and he did his business.

The next morning, they all pitched in and had the meat canned, made sausage, and jerked some of it all before dinner. Ron got to take Lucky out and play, it seemed he was getting to the stage that he could run around and play for a while without getting tired. Roy figured that Jim had better include several bags of dog food in his next trip, Lucky was growing faster than Sam did. Roy got on the radio, and talked to Jim. Jim told him he was way ahead of him, and had already requested several bags of dog chow - he saw how big Lucky was getting, and knew he was going to be eating regular dog chow soon.

Jim arrived several days later and delivered 4 50 pound bags of dog food, 6 cases of Mason canning jars, and 6 months worth of staples. Ron had hit his growth spurt, and was eating like a horse. When they had everything unloaded, Jim joined them for some target practice. Ron helped Roy and Jim move some 12 inch logs out in front of the porch, about 25 yards away, and then Anne added some empty soup cans for .22 practice. Everyone put on their eye and ear protection, then Ron unloaded the hot reloads and loaded a cylinder of practice ammo for the Colt Anaconda. After getting the All Clear from Roy, Ron proceeded to put 6 rounds into the center of the log at 25 yards. When he was finished, Jim sat there open mouthed. All 6 rounds were in the center of the log, and the edges were touching, and it looked like a daisy about 2 inches in diameter. If you subtracted the diameter of the bullet, that meant he shot an inch and a half group at 25 yards with a .44 Magnum hand cannon.

Roy shot next, and his group was about 3 inches in diameter. He thought he was doing OK since any of those rounds would have killed a bear, and that was the whole point of this exercise. When they got done shooting the hand cannons, they switched to the Ruger suppressed 22/45’s, and Anne won that contest - she was still the best shot with the little .22 pistols. She was regularly hitting soup cans at 50 yards with open sights. Anne seemed to be

having a problem controlling the recoil of the hand cannons, but was good enough to take care of any bear that threatened the family. She was Wyatt Earp with the .22 pistol though. She shot good enough with the Browning A-Bolt BOSS equipped .308 to make the ARMY shooting team, and maybe qualify as a sniper.

A week later, Jim flew in again, this time he had a surprise for them. Anne's Brother Steve had decided to come home on leave, and wanted to see his Sister and his nephew. Steve had never met Ron, so it was quite a shock to Ron to see a large man wearing an Air Force Colonel's uniform step out of Jim's plane. Anne ran up to Steve and gave him a big hug.

"Steve, you're home - why didn't you call?"

"Anne, I got two weeks leave, and I wanted to spend some time with you. I couldn't call most of the time because I was involved in some very classified missions. I missed you and Roy." Ron walked up to him, and Steve picked him up and gave him a big bear hug "You must be Ron. You weren't even born the last time I was in Allakaket. I was at Roy and Anne's wedding, matter of fact, I gave the bride away."

Ron finally realized this was Steve, his long-lost uncle. He finally noticed the rows of decorations on his uniform and the Special Forces Beret he was wearing. He was full of questions, but waited until the adults were finished welcoming Steve home. Roy immediately offered to put Steve up in the cabin for as long as he wanted to stay, they had a spare cot they could set up in the second room next to Ron's bed. Steve accepted, since he didn't know that many people in town, and he was here to see Anne, Roy and Ron. Jim helped Steve carry his stuff into the cabin. He had 2 duffle bags full of stuff. Roy hoped he packed some civilian clothes, otherwise he would always feel like saluting.

When they got inside, Roy asked Steve about what he was doing in the Air Force. Steve gave them the Reader's Digest version, skipping the classified stuff. He had been in Desert Storm II, Kosovo, Central America, and several countries he couldn't tell them about. Anne asked him how he came to be a Colonel in the Air Force. When he left, he was just going to be a Para-rescue jumper.

"Anne, I got into the program, then I was accepted for Air Force Special Forces. Those are the guys who fly the Pave Hawk MH-60G behind enemy lines to rescue pilots or to support Special Forces operations. They needed volunteers for a special program that was so classified that we had to volunteer without really knowing what we were volunteering for. Anyway, I was tired with just training, and I figured this would be the best way to see some action. Boy was I right. First they sent me off to the Ranger's Special Forces School, where I received some very advanced training, then they spent the next 6 months training me in the Pave Hawk before I went on a single mission. When DSII came up, we were assigned to the Rescue Squadron. Every time a pilot went down, we got the call. While there weren't as many missions as Desert Storm, they were really hairy. One of the guys I rescued is now a General in the Air Force, and

he put through the paperwork for me to go OCS. I went through OCS and came out an “Instant Officer”. The jump in pay was nice, but I was still doing the same job. We kept getting assignments from JSOC, sorry that’s Joint Special Operations Command, and finally we were integrated fully into the JSOC command structure. That’s when we were issued the Special Forces berets. Anyway, I’ve been in the Air Force for 13 years, and Special Forces for 10 years officially. I get command of the entire Pave Hawk Wing next month, so I applied for leave, since I’m going to be busier than a 1-armed paper hanger when I go.”

Just then Lucky walked in “Roy, where’s Oliver?”

“Steve, Oliver died a couple of years ago - remember, Ron’s 13 now.”

“I guess that make sense, who is the cute puppy?”

Ron spoke up “His Name’s Lucky.”

“Here Lucky” A few seconds later, Lucky sniffed experimentally at Steve’s hand, and Steve stroked Lucky’s fur. Minutes later, Lucky walked over and plopped down in from of Ron. Steve was looking at Lucky and Ron when he noticed Ron was wearing a double shoulder holster with a Ruger 22/45 and what looked like a Colt Anaconda. “It couldn’t be” Steve thought “He’s too young to be carrying that hand cannon.” Steve’s curiosity got the better of him and he asked Ron if that was a Colt Anaconda he was carrying.

“Sure is, want to see it?”

Steve nodded, so Ron slipped it carefully out of the holster, making sure not to point the barrel at anyone, opened the crane, and dumped the rounds into his hand like his dad had shown him. When he unloaded the gun, he handed it butt first to Steve. Steve was impressed with Steve’s gun handling knowledge. He didn’t have anything bigger than a .22 when he was Ron’s age. He admired the gun for a minute, then handed it back to Ron.

“Roy, I’m not trying to criticize, but why does Ron have a huge hand cannon at 13? When I was his age, I was still playing with .22 rifles.”

Before Ron could interject, Roy spoke up. “Steve, Ron killed a bear that was attacking him and Sam a couple of months ago with his Ruger .22/45 Sam died protecting him, and Ron got a lucky shot and hit the bear in the eye with his second to last round.”

Steve’s eyes got as big as saucers. “You killed a charging bear with a .22/45?”

“Actually Sam did most of the work, all I did was get a lucky shot to kill him. That damn bear cost me my best friend.”

Roy decided to give Steve some “back story” at this point, and told Steve about Sam, and how he came to be in their family and what he knew about the encounter with the bear.

“Ron, I’ve met some brave men in my day, but I don’t know anyone who has faced down a bear with a .22 pistol. Can I shake your hand?”

Steve stood up to shake Ron’s hand, and ended up giving him another bear hug.

“Roy, you did the right thing giving Ron a .44 Magnum to protect himself. Ron was always around when we were out in the wilderness, and he never went anywhere without his .44 Magnum.”

“Steve, Jim gave me Ron’s .44 Magnum Colt Anaconda after I had returned from Allakaket the first time. He said that for some reason Ron left the gun in his drawer this one time. Since he already had one, he decided Ron would have wanted me to have it. Since then, I’ve shot about 6 bears with it, and I gave Jim the skins from 2 of them.”

“I guess you guys have a lot of bears around here. I need to do my mile run with my Morning PT, is it OK if Ron comes with me to keep me company, and keep the bears from getting to me?”

Roy laughed, “I’ll do one better. I stay around the house most mornings now, so if you want to, you can borrow the entire shoulder holster and wear it when you’re out running. If you want to shoot your brother’s old gun, we have a couple of hundred practice rounds that Jim brought up with him last time.”

“I’d like that.” Steve turned to Ron “So you up for a little morning PT?”

Ron still had a slight case of Hero Worship, so he said “Yes Sir” immediately.

“Great, I get up at 0600 every morning for 30 minutes of calisthenics and a mile run.”

“0600?”

“Six AM to you civilians - you probably get up at first light anyway around here.”

“Sure Uncle Steve - I’ll be ready and waiting.”

Chapter 55 - PT

Ron was up at first light, and got dressed quickly. Steve was up 15 minutes later, and was glad Ron was already up and dressed. Ron took Lucky out and took care of business, then fed and watered Lucky. When they were ready to go, Ron grabbed his shoulder holster and fanny pack, and took them outside and left them on the porch. If they were going to do calisthenics, he didn't want them banging into him. Steve was wearing a set of BDUs since it was still cold there in the morning. He normally worked out in t-shirt and shorts, but it was just above freezing this morning. Steve said one word "Ready" and started doing jumping jacks, counting out loud. Ron quickly joined him, and although he got a C- for form, he got an A for effort. Steve smiled, and after he did 100, switched to push-ups. He dropped into the classic military pushup position, and Ron hurried to match him. When they were both up, Steve started counting. Ron joined him in the cadence this time. After 50 pushups, he was pleasantly surprised to see Ron still working at it. Normally he did 100, but knocked off after 75 after seeing the strain on Ron's face. He stood up and jogged in place a minute to loosen his legs, then stopped long enough to gear up. Ron hurried into his shoulder holster and fanny pack, then Steve led off to the lake at a jog/trot. Ron ran 3 paces behind Steve, and kept up all the way. It was about a ¼ mile to the lake, so Steve turned north and kept running. He turned around after another ¼ mile and headed back to the cabin. Ron stayed with him all the way back, and when they got to the Cabin, Steve called "Squad march" even though there was only 2 of them. They marched the last 100 yards to cool down, and when they got to the cabin, they took off the gear, and went into the second bedroom. Breakfast was already ready, but Steve felt he needed to get cleaned up, so Roy told him he'd need to take a sponge bath, since they didn't have showers here. Steve got a good laugh, then Ron showed him where the towels were, and how to operate the water. The hot water was almost scalding since Anne had just cooked breakfast, so Steve opened both faucets, and had reasonably hot water. When he finished, Ron took a quick sponge bath, then they sat down for breakfast. When they finished, Steve asked Roy what the plan was for today.

"Ron and I were going to cut and chop some firewood. I could use the help if you don't mind."

"Lead on McDuff."

Roy got the chainsaw and his safety gear, filled the saw, and carried the whole collection to the grove of trees that were over 100 yards away from the cabin. Ron carried a single-bit ax to chop the branches off, and pulled the dollies. About half way there, Steve volunteered to carry the saw. When they got there, Roy started putting on his safety gear, and had Ron and Steve move a safe distance away. Saying a quick prayer, Roy fired up the saw, and started dropping trees. He was an old pro at this, and soon a dozen large trees were down. Ron and Steve took over, and quickly de-limbed the trees, and dragged them to the dollies. Steve slid into the harness, and easily pulled 3 12-in logs that were almost 30 feet long. Roy envied him his strength and stamina. Even in his prime, Roy didn't have muscles like that. He thought that

since Steve was a Para-rescue jumper, he hit the weight pile on a daily basis, since he might need to carry a 150 pound soldier to safety. With Ron and Steve helping, they made short work of the logs, and soon they were ready to chop and split the logs. Steve lifted a log into the sawhorse, and Roy fired up the chainsaw. As soon as he was done cutting the log, Steve pushed the end towards him, and he kept cutting until Steve got too close for safety and had to stop pushing. During the breaks, Ron picked up the logs, moved them a safe distance away, and split them with a sledge and a wedge. Roy used to use a splitting maul until Jim pointed out the sledge/wedge combination was faster and easier. After the logs were split into a useable size, Ron stacked them around the house. The entire process used to take a whole day, but Steve was able to help them turn it into a morning task. When they were finished, Roy cleaned off, and got a large pitcher of tea and 3 glasses. The water from the tap was cold enough that it didn't need ice. When they drank the entire pitcher, Steve asked "What next?" Ron asked if they could get in some target practice.

"Let me check with your Mom first."

Roy took the pitcher back inside, and Anne told him it was OK, and she'd be out in a minute or two to join them. Roy gave them the good news, and Steve said he needed to get something, and was back in a minute with his personal sidearm, A P-14 Limited in Stainless steel. He brought 1,000 rounds of FMJ practice ammo with him, and 4 magazines. Steve took the entire case outside, and quickly unloaded the 200gr Corbon Flying Ashcans from the magazines, and stored them in a Ziploc bag, then reloaded them with the FMJ ammo. Steve put on his earplugs and Gargoyle Shooting glasses. Ron thought Steve looked like Arnold Swartzenegger with those glasses

"I'll Be Back." said Steve in his best (Lame) Ahnold Voice.

Ron laughed, and said "Don't quit your day job."

Anne joined them, and soon they were dragging several 12 inch log segments out to the "front yard" at 20-50 yards. When everyone had the eye and ear protection on, Ron volunteered to go first. He dumped the hot reloads out of the Colt Anaconda, and loaded the practice ammo. As soon as he was done reloading, he looked left and right to make sure the range was clear, and said "Clear", then brought the .44 Magnum up to firing position, thumbed back the hammer, and put a round dead center in the 25 yard target. Again, he kept firing about a round per second, and 6 seconds later, he had about an inch group into the log.

This time it was Steve's turn to stand there open mouthed. "Dang, Ron - were did you learn to shoot like that."

"My Mom taught me how to shoot rifle, and my Dad taught me to shoot pistol."

"You shoot good enough right now to qualify Expert in the Air Force."

Roy spoke up with a hint of pride in his voice “You think that’s good, let him shoot his Browning A-bolt .308 at a target 400 yards away - the kid’s practically a Sniper.”

“This I gotta See.”

Anne walked in to get the rifle, while Ron and Steve marched a 12-inch log out to about 400 yards. Roy set up a shooting position for him, and when they got back, Anne had the Browning A-bolt out of its case, and Steve was admiring it.

“That’s a beautiful rifle. I always did prefer Synthetic stocks to wood stocks for precision marksmanship.”

Ron picked up the rifle, and 5 rounds of Lake City Match Ammo, and walked over to the shooting position. He got down in a Military Prone position, loaded the rifle, and got set. He left the bipod up, preferring to shoot regular military to supported military. When he was ready, he checked the range, and yelled “Clear”. He cycled a live round into the action and cleared the safety. He steadied his breathing, and concentrated on the target. As soon as the crosshairs on the Leupold scope aligned exactly with the center of the log, he touched the trigger, and the gun roared. He cycled the action without moving anything but his shooting hand from the trigger to the bolt, and shot 4 rounds in rapid succession. He left the bolt open to cool the gun off, while they walked down to the target to check the damage. 5 rounds were within 2 inches of each other. Steve’s eyes started bugging out. He had worked with the Air Force Shooting team before, and they were the only people he knew that could shoot sub MOA groups at 400 yards. Ron had just shot a .5 MOA group.

“Ron, I don’t know how to tell you this, but you could qualify for the Air Force Shooting Team right now - Except you’re only 13.”

Ron’s smile would have lit an average gymnasium. Even Roy and Anne were suitably proud of their son.

“Steve, if you think I’m good, you should see Mom. She makes my groups look like shotgun patterns.”

“Guess I should have been paying more attention when Ron tried to teach me how to shoot, Right Anne.”

“Ron seemed to have inherited his rifle shooting ability from me, but Roy was the one who taught him how to shoot pistol like that.”

“Ron, How would you like to try my .45?”

“Sure, if it’s OK with my dad.”

Ron turned to look at Roy, who said it was OK.

Steve showed Ron the basics of how to operate the 1911 .45acp semiauto pistol. After some experimenting with grips and stances, he decided to try a Weaver stance, and asked Steve to hand him a magazine. Before he loaded it, Steve reminded Roy and Anne that the 1911 throws its cases to the right, and would they please all move over to the left side of Ron so they wouldn't get nailed with the empty casings. After they had moved, Steve handed Ron a 14-round magazine that Ron slid into the magazine well and slammed home just like Steve had shown him, then pointing the barrel downrange, grabbed the back of the slide, and pulled. It was hard to pull, but he got it, then he let the slide fly forward to chamber a round. Since he was ready to shoot, he didn't set the safety. Keeping the gun pointed downrange, Ron took a firing grip on the gun, and assumed the Weaver stance. He aimed at the 25 yard target, and as the sights formed a perfect 6 o'clock hold, he gently squeezed the trigger. The gun recoiled, but not as badly as the .44 Magnum did. As soon as he brought the gun back down out of recoil and the sights were aligned again on the target, he squeezed the trigger. 14 rounds later, the slide locked back on an empty magazine. They walked down to the log to check Ron's group, and Steve turned to Ron and said, "Are you sure you've never shot a .45 before?" Ron's group was about 2 inches around, which was pretty good for his first time, and beat the pants off 90% of the people who qualified with the .45 in the Rangers.

"Roy, I've got to bring Ron to MacDill with me some time, the guys would never believe this unless they saw it."

He turned to Ron and asked him "How would you like to visit your Uncle Steve at MacDill where I work?"

"Sure, if it's OK with Dad."

Roy decided he needed to put the kibosh on it for now.

"Ron, you're too young to travel that far by yourself. Otherwise, I'd say yes in a heartbeat."

"Roy, one of the nice things about being a Colonel in Special Forces is we have a bit of pull. If the three of you want to spend a week or two at MacDill, I can arrange MAC transport from Anchorage directly to the base. I can put you up in base housing, so your only expense would be getting to Anchorage."

"Can we Daddy, Can WE?"

"Let me talk to your mother about this - besides what are we going to do with Lucky?"

"Bring him, of course."

“Well, that settles that - Ok if I let you know later Steve?”

“Sure, no rush, I’m going to be here for 2 weeks.”

After that, they resumed target practice. Steve was no slouch with the 45, and shot a 2 inch group at 25 yards at a military cadence of 1 round per second. Roy and Anne both shot their .44 magnums, then Anne suggested a little .22 golf. Seems Jim had located a supplier of used range balls, and had brought several hundred with him since he got tired of shooting at tin cans, and introduced them to “.22 Golf”. The object was to shoot a golf ball with a .22 so that it jumped in the air. You won the game by either hitting the most golf balls, or hitting a golf ball in midair. Anne brought out the golf balls, and proceeded to throw a dozen or so out into the front yard. Ron, Roy, and Anne took out their suppressed Ruger 22/45s. Steve was impressed, the last time he had seen suppressed pistols was during a Special Forces mission. He asked Ron if he could take a look at it. Ron removed the mag and cycled the action to make sure the chamber was clear, then locked the slide back and handed Steve the gun. Steve hefted the gun and checked it out. It was exactly what he thought it was, a stock 22/45 with an integral Ares suppressor. He asked Ron for the magazine, and he loaded the gun, cycled the slide, and pointed the gun at a golf ball 40 feet away. He hit it after 3 tries, and by the end of the magazine, he had hit 4 golf balls, but didn’t get close to any of the airborne ones. He was amazed at how quiet the suppressor was - the suppressed 45s they had at MacDill were almost twice as noisy, and they were considered quiet. When they were done shooting .22 Golf, they tallied the score, and Roy won by 1 point, seems no one hit a golf ball in midair, even though Steve and Roy both came close. Ron came in third, with Anne as the low man on the telephone pole. She didn’t worry - pistol shooting wasn’t her cup of tea anyway. It was fun, but she couldn’t get all excited about it the way Ron and Roy did.

When they were finished, it was starting to get dark, so Anne said she’d have supper ready in a little bit. Roy, Ron and Steve sat on the porch talking about guy stuff until Anne called them in for dinner. When they were all seated, Steve noticed the bowed heads, and quickly joined them. Roy said grace, then they passed the food around. Good thing that Anne had made extra, since Steve had a appetite even bigger than Ron’s, and they both went back for seconds. After dinner, Ron took Lucky out for a walk, then fed him and gave him fresh water. They sat around and talked until they got tired, basically catching up. Steve complimented Anne and Roy for how well they seemed to have raised Ron. Anne told Steve that Ron had taken the PSAT over the internet, and had scored in the top 10%, and he was only 13 up against high school Juniors who were 3 years older than he was. She explained that they had home schooled Ron, and he had already passed his High School Equivalency, and that he was doing advanced studies in Math and Science.

Steve asked Ron the \$500.00 question “So what do you want to do when you grow up?”

“Uncle Steve, I really haven’t given it much thought, I want to go to College, but there is no way we can afford it - so I’ll have to think of something else.”

“Whoa Hold on there Partner. You think that a little thing like money will stop you. How would you like an all-expense paid scholarship to the Air Force Academy?”

“Air Force - I never considered the Military?”

“After I saw the way you can shoot, you could get a full-ride scholarship just based on your shooting skills - the Air Force Shooting Team needs people who can shoot Rifle and Pistol like you can. If you don’t loose your skills, you could qualify for the team right now. If you get any better, you could be the best shooter on the team.”

“You mean that the Air Force will pay me to go to college, and all I have to do is shoot. Heck I do that for fun. Where do I sign up.”

“Not so fast Ron, we can’t accept you until you’re at least 17, and that’s with your parent’s permission.”

“Rats - that means I have to wait 4 more years.”

“Ron, have you ever been flying?”

“Just that one trip with Mom and Dad and Uncle Jim where he let me ride in front.”

“Ever think about flying full time?”

“You mean as a Fighter Pilot? I don’t know - seems were the real action is was on the ground. I mean what challenge is there to shooting some poor Iraqi pilot out of the sky over 5 miles away who doesn’t even know you’re there.”

“Well if you’re even interested, I talked to Grandpa Jim, and he’d love to teach you how to fly. The only thing you’d have to pay for is the fuel.”

Ron’s eyes got as big as saucers. “Dad, can I.”

“Ron, first of all, Mom and I need to talk about this, then I need to talk to Jim. Flying’s dangerous. That’s how Steve’s older brother Ron died, in a flying accident.”

Ron seemed disappointed, but said nothing further. A while later, they all went to bed so they could get up early.

Chapter 56 - Vacation

Steve spent the rest of his vacation helping Ron and Roy cutting firewood, fishing, and spending some time target practicing. Steve and Ron did Military PT every morning, and by the 3rd day, Ron was doing the exercises like a drill instructor. They also spent a lot of time talking. Steve realized his nephew was very special. Somehow the combination of Roy and Anne, genetically, psychologically, and spiritually combined into Ron, who had some exceptional abilities. He had a phenomenal memory, could do calculus in his head, could shoot as well as a Special Forces trained Sniper, and had the mentality that it was no big deal to have all these gifts. He said, “God made me this way, I can’t take any credit for it, I can just work as hard as I can to use them to the best of my ability.” Steve guessed he had to add Humility to that list. Steve was salivating at the possibilities of getting Ron into the military, he would be an asset in more ways than one, yet at the same time, he was only 13, and still entitled to his life. Steve realized he couldn’t push too hard, but if Ron wanted to follow in his footsteps, Steve could grease the skids and open a bunch of doors.

When the two weeks were up, Steve almost didn’t want to go back; Roy and Anne’s life here was so idyllic. Yet he had responsibilities, and men to train. When Jim arrived to take Steve back, Roy took Jim aside and had a very interesting conversation with him. It seemed that Steve asked Jim if he’d like to give Ron flying lessons, and up till now, had never even considered it. He checked with the FAA in Anchorage, and they verified that his VFR Instructor license was still valid, and the youngest they would accept a student pilot was 13, with a regular age limit for VFR pilot’s license of 16, but that could be waived for exceptional young pilots. Since there were no IFR fields in rural Alaska, 99% of the bush pilots held VFR licenses. Jim could see the steam coming out of Roy’s ears, but the die was cast - If Ron wanted to take flying lessons, he had to admit that Jim would be the perfect instructor. He was an OLD pilot, and that meant he was careful. As the saying went, “There are Old Pilots, and Bold Pilots, but NO Old Bold Pilots.”

Ron ran up to Jim, “Grandpa Jim, Would you teach me how to fly?”

Ron looked at Roy, who nodded approval.

“OK, Ron, but it’s a long involved process. You have to spend months in ground school learning some very important lessons before you even set one foot in a plane, and I’ll have to borrow a dual-control plane to take you up in. If you study really hard, you might have your VFR Pilot’s license by your 16th birthday, which by the way is the youngest the FAA will grant an unrestricted VFR pilot’s license. If you’re sure you want to do this, I’ll come back next week with a load of books you need to study, then you can have Anne or Roy test you on it. When they’re satisfied you know this stuff cold, I’ll apply for your Student Pilot’s Permit, and you can go flying with me.”

Ron gave his Grandpa a bear hug “Thanks Grandpa. I can’t wait. It was so cool in the front seat when we flew up from Allakaket.”

“One Thing Ron - you have to study hard, if I know Anne, she’ll grill you on this stuff, and won’t cut you any slack.”

“So what else is new? Mom’s been my teacher for almost 10 years now. She’s tough but I learn a lot. Bet you didn’t know I’ve already passed my GED test?”

Jim was taken aback, unlike other states, the Alaska General Equivalency Diploma test was a bear, and most high school age students didn’t pass the first time, and Ron was only 13. The GED meant he could legally stop studying if he wanted to, but he kept right after it, studying Advanced Science, Math, and English classes in hopes of passing his Advance Placement test so he could bypass a bunch of lower division college units to save money in college tuition. No wonder Steve was so interested in getting Ron into the Air Force Academy. Ron was a shoe-in if he wanted to go, and now Ron expressed an interest in Flying, and according to Steve, he shot good enough to shoot on the Air Force Shooting Team. Jim would have to make sure this was what Ron wanted, because once he started down that road, he was sure the skids would be greased and doors opened to make sure he stayed in. All in All, life as an Air Force Officer was pretty good. Life as an Air Force Pilot was even better, especially if you got assigned to an overseas European or Pacific base.

Meanwhile he had a grandson to look out for. Ron broke the hug, and ran to Steve, gave him a big hug, and Steve reminded them that they were welcome at the MacDill AFB anytime they wanted to, and he could arrange MAC transport from Anchorage and put them up in base housing for 2 weeks. Steve gave Anne a big hug and almost started crying. He was going to miss his big sister. When Anne let him go, he gave Roy a firm handshake, which evolved into a “guy hug”. Steve’s bags were already loaded on the plane, so Steve got into the passenger seat, and as soon as everyone was clear, Jim started the engine, and as the prop slowly spun up to speed, he completed pre-flighting the plane, and turned to taxi to the lake. Steve waved bye from the passenger seat as they turned around to leave, and then they were taxiing out of sight. Jim turned downwind to taxi to the end of the lake, and finally turned the plane into the wind. After verifying everything was set properly for takeoff, Jim pushed the throttle to take-off, and quickly build up to takeoff speed. Since the plane was basically unloaded, he only needed 2/3 of the lake, so made a steeper than usual take-off climb to impress Steve. He leveled off at 2,000 ft AGL, and turned for Allakaket. He needed to refuel before flying to Anchorage. During the flight, the conversation turned to Ron.

“Steve, I know you are thinking about getting Ron into the Air Force Academy, but he’s only 13. Go easy on the kid, OK?”

“Relax Jim, He’s only 13, he’s got another 4 or 5 years before the Air Force would be interested in him, so you can relax; besides a lot can happen between now and then.”

“That’s easy for you to say Steve, but I have a very impressionable 13 yr. old kid back there with a serious case of hero worship. I don’t want him to base a life decision on someone who spent 2 weeks with him after 13 years. Roy and Anne have done their best to raise their son to keep his options open, now I see the skids are greased for him to become an Air Force Pilot. What if he dies in combat. That would crush Anne - do you really want to put your sister through that?”

“OK Jim, I see your point, but first of all, while I might have greased the skids, he has a lot of hoops to jump through before the Air Force would let him anywhere near a \$10 million dollar aircraft - I think you’re getting a little ahead of yourself. For all we know, Jim, even if he gets into the Academy will be up against the best of the best from the nation, and there are very few Fighter Pilot slots opening up now that World Peace has broken out. Odds are he’ll join the Air Force, be on the Air Force Shooting Team, and go on to lead a normal life.”

“Or if his Recruiter gives him the shaft, he could wind up an Air Force Cook.”

“Not bloody likely Jim. I’ve got enough pull so that if he does his part and excels at the Academy, he can write his own ticket in the Air Force - basically he could do anything he wanted. Some Airman fold under the pressure, but from what I’ve seen and heard about Ron, he’s kind of like me, and he thrives on pressure, and enjoys the rush.”

“That’s true Steve, you were always a daredevil growing up - wasn’t it you that took that crazy ride down the river in a rubber raft?”

“Yeah, and I almost drowned twice - then Roy comes along and does it in a dugout canoe.”

“Except Roy didn’t have a choice - you did. He probably would have died if he had tried to hike from his cabin to Allakaket. But that wasn’t enough of a rush for you, you had to go and do the most dangerous job in the Military, Para-rescue. Then you volunteered for Special Forces - Talk about “Out of the Frying Pan and Into the fire”. I still haven’t heard any stories from you about that, but I can imagine they would be hair-raising.”

“Jim, there were a couple of tight spots, but I just went on training and got through it. They train you to the point that your response to danger is automatic, and you don’t have to think about it. Now that I’m a Colonel, I’ll tell you I miss the action, but now I get to be responsible for the entire wing of Pave Hawks, and the crews including all the PJs.”

“What’s it like to fly in a Pave Hawk flying nap of the earth?”

“You remember the Viper ride at Magic Mountain?”

“Never been on it, but I heard that some riders have fainted from fear.”

“Well, flying nap of the earth in a blacked out Pave Hawk makes that like riding the Tea Cups in Disneyland.”

“I think I’ll stick to fixed wing, thank you.”

“OK, but if you ever want to ride in a Pave Hawk, the offer stands to come down with Roy and his family for a couple of weeks.”

“I’ll have to think about it. OK, we’ll have to postpone the rest of this conversation, I need to concentrate on our approach, we’re about to land at Allakaket.”

“Jim calling Allakaket Tower, requesting approach and landing instructions.”

“Tower to Jim, Pattern is clear, wind is out of the west like usual, just come on in.”

Jim lined up for approach, and cranked the flaps out to full to slow down to his approach speed. He only wanted 10 knots above stall to get the lightly loaded plane down. When his airspeed indicator indicated 100 knots, he called final, and followed the glide slope down to touchdown, as usual, he made a perfect landing, and slid up the bank to the airstrip from the lake. Jim was real glad when they put that concrete ramp in, because more than once someone had hit the dirt bank too fast and nosed over, damaging their prop. Now the concrete ramp smoothed the transition, and now it was practically a cake walk.

Jim and Steve took the opportunity to walk around and stretch their legs while the plane was refueled and serviced. 5 minutes later, they were ready for the leg to Anchorage. Jim did a walk-around just to make sure everything was good to go, checked the fluids, then finally they were seated, and Jim started the motor again, taxied, and called the tower for takeoff clearance. As usual, there was no one around, so he got approval for a direct flight path into the Anchorage TCA. Two hours later, they landed at Anchorage, and Jim drove Steve over to Elmendorf AFB. They had about an hour to kill before Steve caught his MAC flight back to MacDill. They spent the time reminiscing about life and memories of growing up in Allakaket. Finally, Steve’s flight was called, and he boarded an Air Force VIP aircraft. Jim saw it coming in, and commented to Steve, “I guess Rank Really Does Have It’s Privileges.”

Steve laughed and gave Jim a hug and boarded his aircraft

Chapter 57 Flying Lessons

A week later, Jim showed up with a box full of manuals for Ron to study. Jim had stuck Post-its on the covers with the number sequence that Jim wanted him to read them in, and a huge document from the FAA which was a study guide/practice test and the Official FAA Student Pilot Permit test. Jim told Roy and Anne some Instructors just gave the students only what they needed to pass their Student Pilot test, but since Ron had 3 years, he wanted to make sure Ron new EVERYTHING to pass his FAA Private Pilot's license beforehand. Most of the manuals were extremely technical in nature, but Jim had taken the liberty of getting several copies of last year's FAA private pilot's exam to use as practice tests. Each section was marked out, and Ron could either take the practice test a section at a time, or the whole test at once. Jim wanted to reserve one copy as a final exam, leaving 3 practice test copies. The practice test copies were in the box, and Jim was keeping the original as a final exam, since his Instructor's Permit - not to mention his life - was on the line.

Roy and Anne were very appreciative of the extra lengths Jim had gone to make sure Ron was qualified and safe to fly a plane.

"Roy and Anne - no need to worry, I located a dual-control trainer that wasn't being used. The owner's a friend of mine, and said if we pay for the gas, oil and maintenance, we could use it for free. I looked it over, and it's in excellent condition." Jim turned to Ron "Ron, I want you to know you are getting one heck of a deal - most Instructor Pilots charge over \$100 per hour for lessons, plus plane rental - so don't waste my time."

"Grandpa Jim - don't worry. I'm 100% committed to learning how to fly - even if I never go into the Air Force, having a pilot's license around Allakaket is kind of like having your driver's license elsewhere - you need to have one to have any freedom, or you're always depending on someone else for a ride."

"Well said Ron - now get to studying. You're not going near a plane until you pass the FAA Private Pilot exam." Jim gave Ron a big hug and headed out the door - he needed to make some other stops.

Ron tore open the box, and started reading. He took a legal pad and pencil to take notes. He read the document covering Pilot's license categories, and decided that he needed a Private Pilot's license with a Sea endorsement to fly float planes. There wasn't much point in having a land only license, since most of the "landing strips" were in fact lakes.

Ron devoted several hours per day studying the manuals when he wasn't doing schoolwork, or helping Roy with chores. Gradually he passed each section in turn, and 6 months later, he was ready to take his first "Practice" Test. He scored 80% - But Anne said "Not Good Enough." So back to studying. Ron studied the sections he missed, called up Grandpa Jim

to ask questions, and understood where he made mistakes. 3 weeks later, Anne gave Ron Practice Test #2. Ron scored 95%. Anne told Ron that if he wanted to, he could take the “for real” test next time Grandpa Jim came up. 2 weeks later, Jim came over with the “final exam”. It took Ron 2 hours to take the exam, and he passed with a score of 98%. He only missed one highly technical question Jim had to admit he didn’t know the answer to either. Jim took the test results and several other forms to the FAA office in Anchorage, AK a few weeks later. Don was flabbergasted when Jim told him that a 13-yr old kid passed last year’s FAA pilot’s exam without any stick time. He issued the Student Pilot’s permit for Ron right then and there. Jim flew over to where the dual control trainer was hangared, and offered to fly the owner back to his house if he could fly the trainer to Allakaket. Since he wasn’t doing anything important that day, and was a real old friend of Jim’s, he agreed, and soon the trainer was hangared in Allakaket. Jim had the FAA mechanic that worked there do a full Airworthiness Survey on the aircraft, and found a few minor things that needed to be repaired and maintained. Jim paid for them right then and there so Ron could get flying. Later that week, the mechanic issued an official FAA Airworthiness Certificate for the aircraft when he finished the list of items.

Next week, Jim flew the trainer up to Roy’s cabin and asked Ron if he were ready to go flying. Jim assured Roy and Anne that he would handle the landings and take-offs, and he might relinquish the controls if he felt the conditions were right, and let Ron fly straight and level for a while. Roy and Anne weren’t too happy, but a deal was a deal, and they had promised Ron that if he passed the test, he could learn to fly.

As soon as they were ready to go, Ron ran around to the passenger seat of the trainer, and belted in. Jim went through the entire pre-flight slowly enough for Ron to watch and memorize every step. Finally when he was ready, Jim turned the mixture to full rich, primed it 3-4 times, set the throttle to $\frac{1}{4}$ and turned the key to the start position. After a couple of slow revolutions, the engine caught, and soon the propeller was spinning. When the motor was warmed and idling at about 1000rpm, Jim eased the throttle out of Start, and bumped it into the lowest taxi position. Jim explained that a land-based airplane could taxi much quicker on the ground, but with the small wheels and big pontoons, he had to taxi as slowly as possible to avoid damaging the pontoons. Jim used the rudder controls to control the brakes to encourage the plane to turn since they weren’t going quick enough for the rudder to turn the plane. When he was facing the lake, Jim released both brakes, and taxied at about 5mph to the lake. When he reached the lake, he told Ron to be ready for a slight bounce as they transitioned from wheels to the pontoons. The bounce was barely felt, then they were floating on the lake, and Jim could now steer the plane with the little rudders on the ends of the pontoons since the brakes didn’t work.

Jim steered the plane to the downwind end of the lake, explaining that you always wanted to take off into the wind, because it increased your effective airspeed, and air speeding over the wings was what created lift, and you need lift to fly - otherwise you drop like a rock.

Ron being the little know-it all said “Actually Grandpa, it’s the difference in air pressure that generates lift; it’s called the Bernoulli Principle.”

“Well, Mr. Know-it-all, you’re half right. Mr. Bernoulli’s Principle doesn’t work if there is no air flowing over the wings, and the forward speed of the wing is directly proportional to the amount of lift generated. OK, tell me the procedure for lifting off.”

“As you rapidly accelerate down the runway, you approach V-1, your decision point to either take off or abort the take-off based on your ground speed, your minimum take-off speed, and how much runway you have left. If you pass V-1, you’re committed to attempting the take-off since you lack sufficient room to safely stop. As you continue to accelerate, you reach V-R, or rotational velocity, the point that the wings are generating sufficient lift to rotate the nose of the plane and transition to wing-borne flight.”

“Great Ron, you can quote the book - now explain what it means.”

“Ok, Gramps - V-1 is the point of no-return, you either stop or fly. V-R is the point when you are going fast enough to lift off the runway and start flying. The closer your V-1 and V-R are to each other, the safer. The more heavily loaded the plane, the warmer it is, and the higher it is, the further they are apart. Density Altitude is a problem at high hot airports like Denver in the summer, where the VR and V1 are far apart, and VR may be past the end of the runway in certain conditions, requiring the pilot to either lighten the plane, or wait until conditions change, because the plane can only accelerate so fast.”

“OK, you’ve got that figured out, now how about VR and V1 for this aircraft.”

“Grandpa, you know I don’t know that - that is type-specific information. Besides we’re waterborne, and I don’t know how long this lake is.”

“Good Answer Ron - OK, this lake is about a mile long at its widest point, and VR as lightly loaded as we are is right about 60 knots indicated. Fully loaded it’s about 65 knots. V-1 on this lake since it’s so small is about 40 knots since we don’t accelerate too well, and there are no brakes on a waterborne aircraft. Once you start accelerating to take-off speed, you’re basically committed to fly, since you can’t stop in time.”

“Thanks Gramps - that’s One fact I didn’t need to know.”

“Get over it Ron - you accept certain risks when you pilot a plane - and a lot of things are beyond your control - like if you hit an air pocket or wind sheer, which is probably what killed your namesake. Stuff Happens around here you have no control over - we fly through and around mountains that create their own weather, and are known to have vicious updrafts and downdrafts of several hundred feet per minute. If you want to get out right now, I’ll take you back to the cabin. Otherwise learn to accept the risks and get with the program.”

“Gramps, if it’s all the same to you - I want to learn how to fly. I just never really internalized the risks before. I mean accident statistics are one thing, and the fact that you can get squashed like a bug in an instant even if you do everything right is another.”

“Ron, there are 3 things you will learn or already have as a Pilot: 1) Faith in God 2) Faith in Yourself and 3) Faith in your plane. If you ever loose one of those 3, Don’t Fly. There are times when you shouldn’t fly - like when the weather is too bad. It’s up to you to weigh the costs and benefits each time you take the stick. Sometimes I fly in marginal weather if there is a life to be saved, but I never fly in marginal weather unless it’s a real emergency. I’m not going to risk my life so a hunter can get to a hunting lodge - he can wait until the weather clears.”

“Well Gramps, I’ve got #1 and #2 down - let’s go work on #3.”

“OK Ron, I’m turning into the wind, make sure your seat belts are fastened and your seats are in the upright position. I’d like to welcome you aboard Jim airlines. Pilot to Co-pilot, prepare for takeoff.” Jim dialed 20% flaps, adjusted the trim tabs, and set the rudder to compensate for the engine torque so they would go straight ahead. He flipped both magnetos off one at a time to make sure they were working, then returned them both to ON and looked over at Ron. Ron gave him a Thumbs up, and Jim advanced the throttle to the stop. The lightly loaded plane leaped forward, and Jim called out V-1 meaning they had exceeded 40mph and were committed. 30 seconds later, and with about ¼ of the lake remaining, he called out VR, and pulled the yoke back into his lap. The plane took a 20 degree nose-up attitude and rotated off the water - they were flying. Jim held the yoke back until they were 500 feet AGL (Above Ground Level) and had cleared the trees around the lake. Jim eased the yoke back to a more sedate climb to altitude, which he set at 2,000 ft MSL (Mean Sea Level). The altimeter slowly crept upwards as he kept climbing.

Ron asked him “Gramps, what’s the max rate of climb for this aircraft?”

Jim answered “The book says 5 feet per second, but I wouldn’t bank on that. Ron did some quick calculations in his head, watching the altimeter and his sweep second hand of his Aviator watch Jim had given him a few years ago. “I think you’re right Gramps, I figured we’re averaging 2 feet per second, and you eased off on the yoke after we cleared the trees, so you’re not climbing at max.”

Jim felt like patting his grandson on the head, but decided he’d better keep both hands on the wheel. When they finally reached their flight level at 2,000 ft MSL, Jim looked around, and the weather was clear. He was high enough to call the tower, so he did. “This is Jim calling Allakaket Tower, over”

“Allakaket Tower, over.”

“Request permission to conduct pilot training around HelpmeJack Lake area, how’s the traffic.”

“Pattern Clear - no traffic for 100 miles if you stay below 5K MSL.”

“Acknowledge Traffic Clear for 100 below 5K MSL. WILCO, Out”

“Ok, Ron. Just tell me what the Tower said.”

“They said that there were no planes for 100 miles around the HelpmeJacks below 5,000 feet MSL. Since this is my first time, I can guess you won’t be climbing much higher.”

“Partial credit for that one Ron, I rarely fly above 2,000 MSL unless I’m flying through a pass, then I climb to clear the nearest peak by 1,000 feet unless the pass is so huge you could fly a 747 through it. Remember if you ever see a mountain goat in the clouds, mountain goats don’t fly.”

“Real Funny Gramps - I saw that Far Side Cartoon as well.”

“Guess what Ron, I want you to take the controls. OK, put your feet on the rudder pedals, but don’t push, and get a feel for how I move the rudder and the stick.”

Ron put his hands on the yoke and his feet on the rudder pedals and felt Jim’s inputs as he maneuvered the plane. Jim banked left, right, climbed, and descended. Nothing too fancy just yet, he wanted Ron to get a feel for how the controls acted and worked together. Jim brought the plane to straight and level, and told Ron. “OK, it’s your turn, just fly straight and level. You felt how much control input I needed to keep it S&L, so don’t use any more than that, or you’ll be chasing the airplane, and you’ll never get it back.” Jim took his hands off the wheel and his feet off the rudders, and Ron was flying the plane. After a couple of minor wobbles, Ron was flying perfectly straight and level. When Ron was good and stable, Jim told him to bring it right around from their 360 heading to 180 without losing altitude. This was a neat trick, since almost any turn with a high degree of bank loses altitude. Ron started the turn with a little Right Aileron, and gradually added right rudder until the plane was tipping about 20 degrees right, and as he noticed the altimeter going down, he thought fast and realized he needed to pull up slightly to compensate. He pulled back slightly on the yoke, and they regained their altitude. Ron leveled out the turn as the compass came around, and they were heading almost exactly 180 - his magnetic compass said 179 instead of 180, but that was close enough for a first time. Some beginners badly overshoot or under shoot their target bearing doing a simple turn. Jim was proud of Ron, but didn’t say anything.

“OK Ron, now let’s try that to the left, Come from 180 back to a heading of 360 degrees magnetic.”

This time, Ron was more aggressive with his turn, and had to add more throttle than last time, but he came out of it exactly at 360 magnetic. When Ron had stabilized the plane on a heading of 360, Jim called “Pilot’s Plane” and put his hands back on the controls. Ron breathed a sigh of relief. Jim said he was going to show him climbing and diving banks, and the sequence of control inputs it took to perform them. Ron tried a few, but was having problems getting the hang of it, so Jim took the plane back.

“Don’t worry Ron, No one gets it right the first time, but you seem to have the knack to be a good flyer. You’re not a natural, but you work hard, concentrate, and plan ahead. I’d rather have a pilot that had to work at it, than a pilot who was a natural at it, since he has to work to understand how the plane works, so if anything goes, wrong, he knows the plane inside and out. I’m going to take us home, I need to get this plane back to Allakaket and get it refueled.”

Jim called the tower “Jim calling Allakaket Tower, Resuming Normal Flight ops.”

“Allakaket Tower, Roger”

Jim told Ron that he had to call in and out of flight ops so the tower would know to give them a lot of free airspace when they had a student pilot up flying the plane. Ron nodded, otherwise he was silent. As Jim headed back to the lake, he talked Ron through the landing procedures and set the plane up to land by cranking out full flaps, and pushing in the throttle to slow the plane to approach speed. Jim noticed a slight cross-breeze, and pointed it out to Ron, who noticed it too. Jim told him he needed to add a little right rudder to compensate for the wind, and started skidding the nose gently into the wind. Jim held everything steady, and the plane’s natural sink rate landed the plane for them. Once they were on the water, Jim chopped the throttle, and the plane settled out quickly and coasted to a stop a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the far edge of the lake. “As you can see, Ron, there’s a pretty small margin of error to land a small plane on a lake. This was a picture perfect landing, and we only made it with a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to spare. Landing on a lake is kind of like landing on an aircraft carrier, except you don’t have an arresting hook, and you don’t get a go-around since you don’t have the power to climb out once you commit to land. Once you’ve drifted below the ridge lines surrounding the lake, you’re committed. I’m going to let you practice landing and taking off from Allakaket since their lake is bigger and the mountains surrounding it are smaller. Jim taxied to the cabin door and let Ron out. Ron waved Goodbye, so Jim turned around and taxied off.

Chapter 58 Misunderstanding

Ron walked into the house looking like he lost his best friend. Anne asked him what happened, and Ron blurted out, “I don’t know if I can get my pilot’s license, Grandpa doesn’t trust me.”

Anne asked Ron what had happened, and he said “I was trying to fly the plane, and I made one little mistake, and he took the controls - It wasn’t even dangerous or anything. I don’t know why he did that.” Ron walked into his room and laid down on the bed. Lucky walked over to him, and started licking his hands. Ron finally rolled over and started petting Lucky, who was getting bigger each day. Anne decided to take matters into her own hands, and tuned the radio to the frequency Jim liked to use in the plane.

“Jim this is Anne. We need to talk. Can you fly back here tomorrow?”

“Anne, sure - I’ll drop off this plane, and be back in mine after first light tomorrow, it’s getting too late to try today. I think I know what’s wrong, but shouldn’t say over the air.”

“OK, see you tomorrow.”

The next morning, they awoke to the sound of a plane taxiing up to the cabin. Anne met Jim at the plane.

“Jim, for some reason Ron thinks you don’t trust him. He said something about taking the controls away yesterday.”

“OK, I know exactly what you’re talking about now - Ok if I go talk to him?”

“Please do - he’s been sulking ever since yesterday.”

Jim walked into the cabin, looked around and didn’t see Ron, so he walked back into the back room. “Knock-knock, OK if I come in?”

“Sure grandpa.”

“Ron, I think you and I got off on the wrong foot yesterday. I think you might have misunderstood why I took the controls yesterday. I didn’t want you to get overloaded and panic when you were having difficulty with the new maneuvers.”

“Grandpa Jim, you took the controls away right as I almost had it figured out, I know what I did wrong, and was in the process of correcting it when you took the plane away. Please don’t take the controls like that again unless I’m doing something dangerous or about to lose

control of the plane.”

“Ron, I wanted to say I’m sorry. You’re the first student I’ve had in almost 30 years. I needed to be more patient. Can you forgive me?”

“Sure Grandpa.” Ron got up and gave his Grandpa Jim a big hug.

“You know Ron, you did very well on those first two turns. “

“Mom and Dad bought me Microsoft Flight Simulator, and I’ve been practicing using the Cessna. It’s not the same though, since the game doesn’t give you feedback like the yoke and rudder pedals do.”

“OK, you realized that it’s not the same as the game, my advice is to stop using the game since it will only mess you up from here on out, you need to get used to the controls of the plane you’re flying. Also, if you noticed, that Cessna had the glide angle of a rock with those big heavy floats on, so you want to remember that when you try and land it, that it needs more altitude and airspeed on approach than your game does.”

“Thanks Grandpa, Can we go flying again next week?”

“Sure Ron, I wanted to go flying at least once a week until you get your license. It takes a lot of practice to master flying, but you have the discipline to do it.”

Chapter 59 - Flying Lessons, Part II

One week later as promised, Jim showed up bright and early with the Cessna trainer. Ron was so eager to get started that he ran out to the aircraft as soon as the propeller had slowed to a stop. He gave his Grandpa Jim a big hug and Jim told him he needed to talk to his parents first. He'd filled the tanks at Allakaket, and wanted to keep him flying longer than last time. Jim told Roy and Anne they'd be out flying for a couple of hours, and they could call him on the aircraft's radio if they got worried. Anne looked nervous, but Roy said "OK, no problems here - have a nice flight." Ron gave Roy a big hug, then he gave his mother a hug, and they were off. Jim made sure Ron was securely buckled in, had his headset on, and the pedal height was properly adjusted before he even started his pre-flight. Thinking fast, Jim told Ron to talk him through the pre-flight sequence. Ron was thinking "He's starting all ready and we aren't even off the ground yet." Then focused on the task at hand.

"OK Grandpa - Preflight sequence. Perform walk-around, checking all surfaces, and fluid levels. I'll assume you did that at Allakaket after you filled up. Next, interior pre-flight. Prior to engine start, check all controls for free movement and response. Next, Radio check. Tune to Guard and check status light, then switch to tower frequency and perform radio check. Since we don't have comms with the tower, you could call my mom & dad, but I doubt they have the radio on right now. Once all Before Starting checks have been completed, proceed to Engine start sequence. Set Mixture to rich, prime 3-4 times, set throttle to $\frac{1}{4}$, and turn the ignition key to Start. Once engine is idling at 1000 rpm, perform Magneto check, and re-set throttle to slow idle."

"Excellent Grasshopper, you will go far."

"Thank you Master Po."

They both got a good laugh out of that tired Kung-Fu joke, then Jim started the engine and taxied out to the lake. Ron was watching him like a hawk, and noticed little things like how he controlled the aircraft using the throttle and brakes on the ground. True to form, Jim taxied out to the lake at about 5mph, then transitioned to the water, and could now move a little faster, and kicked the taxi speed up to about 20 mph. When they got to the end of the lake, Jim reviewed the take-off sequence with Ron, and asked him if he were ready to fly. When Ron gave him a thumbs-up, Jim shoved the throttle to full, and they were accelerating down the lake. As the airspeed indicator read 65 knots, Jim pulled the yoke back, and they were flying. Jim held the yoke back until they had cleared the trees at the end of the lake, then set the plane up to climb at its best speed instead of max climb rate. When he reached 2,000 ft, Jim contacted the tower. "Allakaket tower, this is J145AWC, Juliet 145 Alpha Whiskey Charlie requesting clearance for student pilot training."

"Juliet 145 Alpha Whiskey Charlie, pattern is clear below 10,000 ft, you are clear for student

pilot training. Hey Jim - you getting formal on us?"

"Negative, just teaching my student proper radio procedures, like using my tail number to identity all my radio calls."

"Allakaket, Roger and clear"

"OK, Ron you heard the man, its all clear, go ahead and take the controls."

Jim stayed on the controls until Ron called "I've got the plane" and Jim took his hands and feet off the controls. Ron was really enjoying himself this time, and wasn't as nervous as last time.

"OK Ron, just fly straight and level for a while, then we'll try those turns again."

After about 15 minutes, Jim said, "OK Ron - right bank, maintain altitude and stop on 270."

Ron immediately turned the yoke 20 degrees to the right and held it, using the rudder to ease the nose around. He lifted the nose slightly to maintain altitude, and stopped the turn exactly on 270 at the same altitude he started at.

"Well Done, Grasshopper - now try a left bank and maintain altitude, come to 90 degrees and stop."

Ron thought "This is a walk in the park" and got a little more aggressive in his turn. He held the bank at exactly 20 degrees, and this time, as well as a slight nose-up, he had to add throttle. He stopped right at 90 degrees.

"Learned something this time grasshopper?"

"Yeah, if I exceed 15 degrees of bank, this plane flies like a rock."

"Exactly - this plane wasn't built as an Amphibian, so you need to keep that in mind if you try any aggressive maneuvers. Not only that, but you don't have a lot of acceleration available with this engine, so if you get too far out of control, it might be tough to recover with throttle only. Ok, now let's try some climbing and diving turns. I want a right turn to 270 and gain 100 feet."

Ron knew to gain 100 feet in a turn, he'd have to add throttle and go easy on the angle of bank, so he only banked 10 degrees, and added 20% throttle while keeping the nose up. He came out of the turn at 270, but he was 10 feet too high.

"Not bad - guessing the throttle setting the first time in a new plane can be a bear. OK, same

turn to the left.”

Ron bumped the throttle back a little, and did everything else exactly the same as last time. As he came up on 90 degrees, he eased up on the ailerons and came out of the turn exactly at 90 degrees, and at the indicated altitude. To say Jim was impressed was an understatement.

“Grasshopper - you learn fast. That was amazing. Feel like trying to take off from Allakaket?”

“Sure Master Po, If you feel honorable Grasshopper is ready.”

“OK, 86 the Kung Fu stuff. Turn to heading 210 and descend slowly to 500 feet. Once you reach 500 feet, call your altitude, and I’ll make the landing.”

“Ok Gramps, turning to 210 and descending.” Since he could lose altitude in the turn, Ron didn’t correct for the loss of altitude in the turn, and when he reached heading 210 magnetic, turned the plane straight and level, and reduced throttle until they were losing about 50 feet per minute.

Ron asked Jim if this descent rate was acceptable, and Jim said to increase descent rate to 100 feet per minute, they were closer than he thought. Ron decreased throttle further, and established a sink rate of 100 feet per minute. 10 minutes later, he stabilized at 500 feet, and called his altitude and heading to Jim. Jim said “Pilot’s plane” and took the controls. Then he called the tower, “Allakaket tower, this is Juliet 145 Alpha Whiskey Charlie requesting approach and landing instructions.”

Juliet 145 Alpha Whiskey Charlie. Winds out of the West as usual, pattern is clear, do you wish to land or touch and go.”

“Tower, we’re going to land, and my Student will be handling the take-off.”

“Roger Jim - it’s your life.”

“Funny Tower. Juliet 145 Alpha Whiskey Charlie on Final.” When he saw the lake in front of him, Jim set the flaps to full and slowed to 85 knots indicated. As soon as he cleared the trees, he reduced speed to 60 knots indicated, and sank the last 100 feet to the lake. He maintained 10 degrees nose-up until the pontoons made contact with the water, and he chopped the throttle, and eased off the yoke until the plane was fully down and floating toward the other end of the lake. Jim eased off the flaps as soon as they were down, and the plane coasted to a stop 100 yards from the far end of the lake. Since they still had enough gas on board for a couple more hours of flight time, Jim turned the plane around on the lake and told Ron that he could take-off from the lake, saving him the bumpy transition from land

to water. Jim turned the plane into the wind, and told Ron “OK, the plane is yours. I’m not going to make you go through the restart sequence, since you can’t reach all the controls from your side, so just go ahead and call the tower and prepare for take-off.”

Ron took a couple of deep breaths, and pressed his PTT button. “Allakaket Tower, this is Juliet 145 Alpha Whiskey Charley requesting permission to take-off with student pilot at the controls.”

“Juliet 145 Alpha Whiskey Charley, permission granted, Winds are out of the west at 10.”

“Roger Tower, starting take-off now.”

Ron looked to Jim, who gave him a thumbs-up. Ron dialed 20 degrees of flap, set the rudder to compensate for the torque of the propeller, and shoved the throttle to FULL. The plane quickly accelerated, and as soon as the airspeed reached 65 knots, Ron eased the yoke back until the pontoons left the lake. He held the nose-up angle until he cleared the trees on the far side of the lake by 100 feet, and eased off of the nose-up attitude until they were in a good high-performance climb to 2,000 ft. 10 minutes later, they were at altitude, and Ron set the plane up for straight and level.

Jim told Ron “That was the best take-off I’d ever seen a student pilot do, then again, you’re only my second student. I’m impressed, you stuck with your plan and went with it - that shows confidence.”

“Grandpa, I’d seen you do so many of them, all I did was copy exactly what you did. I knew if you could do it, as long as I did exactly what you did everything would work the same.”

“OK, since we have the airtime, want to try some other things?”

“Sure - just tell me what to do, and how to do it.”

“OK, first thing is MCAS or Minimum Controllable Airspeed. This will teach you exactly where is the stall point of the aircraft. OK, next perform gentle clearing turns, and slow down to 80 knots indicated. Once you reach 80 knots, slowly extend flaps to 40 degrees, maintaining heading and altitude. When airspeed reaches 45 knots, increase throttle to 2,000 rpm and maintain heading and altitude. Make sure to use rudder as you increase throttle to maintain heading. To recover, throttle to full and retract flaps to 10 degrees until 65 knots indicated, then fully retract. You ready, go ahead and try it.”

“OK Gramps, starting turns and reducing throttle. Indicated air speed 100 knots, slowing. OK, 80 knots indicated, maintaining straight and level, slowly extending flaps to 40 degrees, air speed dropping. Flaps to 40 degrees, airspeed still dropping. OK, Airspeed 45 knots indicated. Tell me when you want to recover.”

“OK Ron, hold this for 2 minutes, then recover.”

Ron knew if he looked at his watch, he'd lose the horizon, so he started counting “one thousand one...” until he got to one-thousand 120, and he quickly pushed the throttle to full, and retracted the flaps to 10 degrees. When he reached 65 knots, he retracted the flaps fully and continued accelerating back to 100 knots indicated. Jim was watching the airspeed and altimeter all the time, and he never gained or lost more than 20 feet in the whole maneuver. Obviously Ron was a better natural pilot than he thought, or he could really concentrate. Remembering what happened last time, Jim thought it was probably the latter. That and Jim had the patience to let Ron fly the plane, instead of constantly grabbing the controls. Constantly grabbing the controls would wreck any student's confidence.

“Great Job Ron, you didn't gain or lose more than 20 feet in the whole maneuver. Now you want to try a for-real stall?”

“Sure if you think I'm ready.”

“OK, here's what's going to happen. You're flying straight and level, and I push the throttle to IDLE while you maintain attitude and heading, the plane will lose lift and stall as you drop below 65 knots without flaps. To recover, assume 10-20 degrees nose down, get the wings level, and push the throttle to full, when your airspeed is above 65 knots and the plane is stable, pull back on the stick until wings are level and you're flying at the horizon again. Ready?”

Ron nodded, and Jim pushed the throttle to idle, and the plane slowed dramatically. The stall warning sounded, and Ron waited until he was in an actual stall before he recovered by pushing the nose down and applying left aileron to stabilize the roll to the right. As soon as his wings were level and he was in control of the plane, he reached over and pushed the throttle to full, as the airspeed climbed above 65 knots, he pulled the yoke back and got the plane straight and level.

“Not bad Ron, but why did you wait until you were in a full stall?”

“Jim, you said “a For-real stall” I wasn't actually in a Stall until the wings departed normal flight. If you noticed, we never dropped below 1,000 ft. We had plenty of time to recover.”

“Sorry Ron, you were right - maybe I should have said a “simulated stall”. A for-real stall can be scary if you go into a spin or otherwise totally lose control of the plane.”

“Actually Gramps, that was kind of fun, can we do it again?”

“Sure, but this time let's climb to 5,000 feet to give us a greater safety margin, I don't think my heart could stand another low-altitude recovery.”

“Gramps, that wasn’t that low, I had another 500 feet to go before it was an emergency situation.”

“Ron, you’re right, but did you check your rate of descent? You went from 2,000 ft to 1,000 ft in less than a minute, that’s a descent rate of 1,000 ft per minute. You were falling like the proverbial rock. I would have given you another second to recover before I would have taken over, since you were falling at 16 feet per second.”

“Yikes. I didn’t realize that. I was so busy recovering the plane, I didn’t watch the altimeter unwinding, but I guess you did. Sorry about that - I hope I didn’t give you a heart attack.”

“Not exactly, but I can guarantee my BP and pulse rate were going through the roof. OK, we’re at 5,000 feet - ready to try it again?”

Ron just nodded, and crossing his fingers, Jim pushed the throttle to idle. This time the plane really departed, and Ron used up most of the extra altitude recovering before it went into a spin and he totally lost control. He finally put the nose down steeper, and went all the way around and caught the roll on the upswing. Jim’s face was white as a ghost - he hadn’t trained Ron in aerobatics. Ron must have been practicing on the computer. Good thing too, since the aerobatic maneuver was exactly what was needed to stabilize the plane. Ron gained full control of the plane at 2,000 feet, and when the airspeed reached 65 with the wings level, he shoved the throttle to full again and recovered to straight and level. When Jim’s pulse slowed down enough to talk coherently, he said “Somebody’s been practicing on the computer. Good thing too, since that Aileron Roll was exactly what was needed to catch the stall and get the wings level. You were too far over in the bank to recover using opposite aileron, you would have run out of altitude before you recovered. It’s OK to practice aerobatics on the simulator, but just remember, with the floats, we’re limited to +/- 2 g’s instead of the +/- 4g’s the plane is rated at. The plane will do 4g’s, you just won’t be able to land without the floats, which would have departed the plane.”

“So Gramps, how was that aileron roll?”

“Considering you’re still a student pilot, it was darn near perfect. I’ll teach you how to roll around a center when we get you into a better plane. When you can roll around the same point in space, you have the aileron roll down perfect. You were a little wobbly around the center, but considering it was your first roll in a real plane, and you were doing it while in stall conditions, I would say it was pretty outstanding. Ready to head home - I don’t think my heart can take much more of this today. I want you to fly the approach, and I’ll land the plane, but keep your hands on the controls so you can feel what I’m doing.”

“Great idea Gramps, that way, I can learn to fly a landing without actually doing it myself.”

“OK Ron, descend to 800 feet and turn to heading 185 for home. And NO aerobatics.”

“Roger, Wilco.”

Ron turned into a hard bank, just short of a wingover, and descended rapidly to 1,000 ft. From there he made a more sedate descent to 800 feet.

“OK Mr. Wise Guy - That was awfully close to going aerobatic, but it was fun. Now slow to 60 knots and when you reach 60 knots indicated, lower the flaps to 40 degrees and maintain 10 degrees nose-up.”

“Roger, 60 knots indicated, 40 degrees flap, and 10 degrees nose up.”

As the airspeed dropped, Ron continued to slowly crank down the flaps until they were at 40 degrees. When he was in the groove, Jim called “pilot’s plane” but Ron kept his hands and feet on the controls to get the feel for what Jim was doing. As they descended below 200 feet, Jim noticed a slight crosswind, and turned the nose slightly into the crosswind to compensate. Jim told Ron about the crosswind, and the best way to handle small crosswinds was to maintain attitude, and turn the nose of the plane into the breeze. As they cleared the trees, Jim chopped the throttle, and the plane mushed down to the lake maintaining the 10 degree nose up all the way to touch down. They landed with a slight splash, but nothing too radical. As soon as the plane was down, Jim released back pressure on the yoke, and the plane settled fully onto the lake, and he retracted the flaps. The plane coasted to a stop 50 yards from the other end of the lake. Jim turned the plane around and taxied back to their beach, and ground taxied back to the cabin. When they were finished, Jim shut off the plane and gave Ron a big hug. “You did terrific today, you were put into some situations that normal pilots hate, and you handled it like a pro. If you want to keep this up, I want to teach you everything I know, and go way beyond the FAA requirements for Student Flying proficiency tests.”

“Gramps, I’d love that - when can we start?”

“Give me a week to get my BP back down to normal, and we’ll do this again. Go ahead and continue practicing aerobatics on the simulator, just remember that this plane doesn’t fly the same as the simulator with the huge floats attached to it.”

When the propeller had stopped spinning Jim went inside with Ron to talk to Roy and Anne, basically he wanted to brag about how good of a pilot his “grandson” was. Anne turned white as a sheet when Jim described the 2nd stall they did. Roy just looked at the two of them and shook his head. He guessed Ron was taking after Anne’s side of the family, and turning into a hotdog thrill seeker. Roy just hoped Ron wouldn’t die in a plane crash. When Jim left, Roy took Ron out to the lake to talk to him.

“Son, we need to sit down and talk about a few things.”

“OK, Dad, I’m listening.”

“You can tell I’m getting old, and you know that I probably won’t live another 20 years, so I need to tell you some stuff and ask you a favor. Odds are your Mom will survive me by quite a while. I don’t know if she will re-marry, but I want you to tell her after I’m gone I said it’s OK if she wants to. Tell her I loved her, and I’ll always love her, and we’ll be together in Heaven. Your mom will probably want to move back to Allakaket, but I’m asking you not to sell the cabin or the property because even if you join the Air Force, you’ll be retired in your 40’s and you have to admit this is the perfect place to live. Also, you’ll probably meet some sweet girl that you’ll want to marry and raise a family. If she wants to, I’d raise your family here for several reasons. 1) Alaska is the freest state in the Union, and the most remote. 2) If the stinky stuff ever hits the rotating blade, and it’s going to - you’ll be the safest here. 3) I’ve given you the entire property in my will, with a proviso that if Anne wants to live out her days here, she has the right of occupancy. 4) I talked to Jim, and all the bush pilots left around here are over 50, which means if you want to fly bush when you retire from the Air Force, you’re going to be in great demand, and Jim has already told me that he’s going to give you his De Havilland Otter. All it will need is an engine rebuild, and it should be good to go for at least 10 more years after he retires. Anyway, regardless of what you do with your life, know this - I am so proud of you son. Anne and I both love you very much. Just make sure you outlive us, because if you died before your Mom, I think it would kill her.”

“Don’t worry dad, when my number’s up, it’s up, but I can guarantee I won’t do anything unnecessarily stupid, unless you include flying fighter aircraft, to hasten that time. I’ll take care of Mom, and make sure she has everything she needs to live a happy and long life.”

“One more thing Ron - I’ve set aside trust funds for both of you from the balances in my bank. Anne can use her’s to live on, and if you want to buy a plane or something, it will either pay for it, or make a huge down payment on one.”

“Dad, remember Gramps already promised me the Otter - but I could use the money to refurbish it if I need to. I hope you live a long time, because I like having you around. but if something should happen to you, don’t worry, I’ll take care of Mom.”

“Thanks son, I know this is a lot for a boy your age to handle, but I guess you figured out years ago that your “Old Man” wasn’t going to live forever since your mom had you when I was in my 50’s. Anyway, let’s get back in the house before your mother worries about us.”

Roy gave Ron a big hug, and they walked back to the house.

Chapter 60 - Landing the Plane

Next week, Jim came back for Ron's weekly flying lesson. Ron had been practicing daily on the computer, and was sure he could handle it. He was 10-10 landing the simulated plane on a postage-stamp sized lake. The lake at Allakaket was 3 times that size. As soon as Jim had landed, Ron met him at the plane, and was all excited to go. This time, Jim didn't go in the house, since he thought the less Anne knew, the less she would worry about, and he didn't want her worrying that her baby boy was going to land a plane for the first time. Jim thought she was being overprotective, but that's what Mothers do. Jim asked Ron if he would like to take off from their lake. Ron's eyes got as big as saucers, and then he had a huge grin on his face. "Sure Gramps. Let's go." Ron flew through the checklists, and started the plane, and as soon as everything was good to go, he blipped the throttle and held the right brake so the plane would turn to the right. When it was facing the lake, Ron released the brakes and taxied slowly to the lake, remembering Jim's admonition to go slow on land, since the huge pontoons made ground taxiing interesting at the least. When they got to the lake, he let the plane slide into the water, then applied more throttle to taxi to the downwind end of the lake. When he got to the end, he turned and waited.

"Ready Jim?"

"Yeah, I brought my Rosary Beads, my lucky rabbit's foot, and my St. Christopher medallion."

"Oh, come on Gramps, it's not that bad - I mean you really didn't have a heart attack when I pulled out of that stall using an aileron roll."

"That's OK, Ron - I made sure my life insurance is paid up."

"Don't worry Gramps, I won't do anything stupid - and by the way, thanks for giving me the DeHaviland."

"Not so fast Ron, first of all, you have to get your Commercial ticket before you can fly it, and second of all - I'm not retired yet. Now get this plane in the air and quit yakking."

"Yes Sir." Ron made sure the plane was ready to take-off, set the flaps and rudder, and then advanced the throttle to FULL. As the plane sped down the lake, he watched the airspeed indicator. When it hit 65 knots, Ron pulled the yoke back, and they were flying. He held the yoke back until they were 100 feet above the treeline, then eased back on the yoke until they were in a cruise climb where they were making the best combination of rate of climb and airspeed. He held that climb until the altimeter read 2,000 feet. Jim told Ron to make the tower call.

“Allakaket tower, this is J145AWC, Juliet 145 Alpha Whiskey Charlie, with a Student Pilot in control, requesting clearance for student pilot training.”

“J145AWC. Clear for training, the pattern is clear below 25k. Jim - please don't tell me you let Ron take off from that postage stamp of a lake of theirs.”

“Tower, sure did, and he did it like a pro.”

“Jim, bet you rubbed a hole in your rabbit's foot.”

Jim looked down, and sure enough, he had rubbed the fur off a spot of the rabbit's foot but didn't say anything to Ron.

“OK, Ron, let's review the maneuvers you've been practicing - I think we can skip the stall this time. OK, Turn right to 270 magnetic, maintain speed and altitude.”

“Roger, turning now.”

Ron performed the turn flawlessly, and the altimeter read 2,000 feet when he finished exactly on 270.

“OK Turn Left back to 90 degrees, same conditions.”

Again, Ron performed flawlessly.

Jim had him do some diving and climbing banks, then finally told him, “Ok, Ron, let's head to Allakaket, I want you to land the plane, stop, turn around and take off again. It's too dangerous to do touch and go's in a floatplane on these small lakes. Heading to Allakaket is 180 magnetic, distance about 20nm. The approach is all yours; I won't interfere unless I have to. Ron did an aggressive diving turn, bottoming out at 800 feet, and kept that altitude until he could see Allakaket coming up, and started his descent to 200 feet while losing airspeed and slowly extending the flaps to full. He reached 200 feet and 65 knots about 2 miles away from the touchdown point, and set up for his landing. First he called the tower.

“Juliet 145Alpha Whiskey Charlie on Final.”

“Roger J145AWC, clear to land, good luck.”

Ron continued on down, and as he cleared the treeline, he further reduced the throttle, and started his final descent to the lake. His first landing was near picture perfect, and was maybe 20 feet short of the ideal touchdown point, but Allakaket's lake was huge, so it had a large margin of error, almost 50 yards on either side of the 3-wire as Jim called it. As soon as the floats touched down, Ron chopped the throttle to idle, and quickly retracted the flaps,

and released the yoke, allowing the plane to settle on the lake. When they had come to a full stop, Jim told Ron he was ready to Solo, but since he was too young, he couldn't legally let him, but the rest of their training flights could be done in the DeHaviland, which could do aerobatics even with the floats. Jim gave Ron a big hug, then told him to turn the plane around and prepare for take-off. When he got the plane facing back into the wind, Ron called the tower "J145AWC, requesting permission to take-off."

"J145AWC, Permission Granted. Congratulations on that landing, we were watching it from the tower, and it looked like you nailed it. Tower Out."

Ron looked to Jim, who gave him a thumbs up, and Ron set the plane up to take off, then shoved the throttle to full again. They were up and flying with almost half the lake to spare. Ron did a more sedate climb-out since he didn't need to clear the trees immediately, and passed over the far treeline about 200 feet over the tops of the trees. he slowly climbed to 2,000 feet and turned to Jim and said, "OK, what now?"

Jim thought for a moment, Ron had already done everything he could do in this plane, and he was good enough to get his pilot's license right now. Problem was, he was only 14, and they didn't give out private pilot licenses until you were 16 now, because of a few famous crashes by young pilots out to break records.

"Ron, I've got a letter in my pocket with Steve's base address on it, but I want to give it to Roy since it's addressed to him, so how about we wrap this up, and you set us down on your lake, and see what that letter says?"

"Gramps, that lake is $\frac{1}{4}$ the size of Allakaket, are you sure you want me to land the plane?"

"I wouldn't have asked if I didn't think you could do it. That landing at Allakaket was a textbook landing. You were only 20 feet short of a perfect landing, so all in all, I feel pretty safe with you at the controls for this landing. Two things I want to tell you, the approach for your lake is much steeper and slower than for Allakaket. Remember when you did that MCAS test, Ok, well you need to get as slow as possible on your approach, and as soon as you clear the ridge, start your descent. You have to loose 200 feet in a $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, and your touchdown point is only 150 feet from the edge of the lake. Got that?"

"Roger, approach at 200 feet, as soon as I crest the ridge, start a 50% descent rate (for every foot forward, I go half a foot down.) until I either crash or land 150 feet from the edge of the lake."

"Ron - quit being a smart-alec, this is serious, and if you don't take it seriously, I'll never fly with you again."

"Sorry Grandpa, it's just that descent rate is a tad steep, what airspeed do I need at 40

degrees of flap to manage that sink rate, you realize that at 45 knots, this plane becomes a rock.”

“Last time I landed this plane here, I maintained 50 knots indicated once I reached 200 feet and full flaps. As soon as I cleared the ridge, I slowed to 45 knots, and I dropped like a rock, but a rock with a parachute. Make sure you maintain 20 degrees nose-up attitude to compensate for the slow steep descent. As soon as you touch down, throttle to idle, and flaps retracted smartly. Then quickly set the nose down. If you get within 50 feet of the opposite shore, give me hard left rudder to turn the plane, which will give you another 200 feet of rundown area to slow.”

“Ok, Gramps, descending to 200 feet and 65 knots.” Ron decided to loose a bunch of altitude in a hurry, and went into a 30-degree bank. 1 minute later, he had dropped from 2,000 to 200 feet, and he stabilized at exactly 200 feet and 65 knots.

“Ron - don’t do that as long as you’re a student. If you ever did that with a FAA inspector aboard, he would have terminated the test right then and there for an unsafe maneuver. Actually, it was exactly the maneuver I use to get down to this lake, except when I’m carrying cargo, then I just chop the throttle and assume a slight nose down attitude. That gives you maybe .5 negative gee, but nothing is going flying around the cabin with a half negative gee. Ok, you’re on final, start slowing to 50 knots.” As soon as they cleared the ridge, Ron slowed to 45 knots and maintained a 20-degree nose-up attitude. He was only 5 knots above stall, and Jim was right, they dropped like a rock with a parachute. Ron was willing the shoreline closer, but didn’t touch the throttle or the yoke, because pulling back even a little would immediately stall the plane, and he was only 50 feet above the water. If he added throttle, he’d overshoot and crash. He stuck with his plan. His heart was in his throat, but his grandpa had done this hundreds of times with planes that were fully loaded with freight, and he knew the glide slope of the de Havilland Otter with 2,000 pounds of cargo was even worse than the Cessna 172 with pontoons. If his Grandpa could do it, so could he. 3 seconds later, he touched down right on target 150 feet from shore, and as soon as he felt the pontoons touch down, Ron chopped the throttle to idle, retracted the flaps, and released the back pressure on the yoke. The nose of the aircraft came down smartly, and the plane slowed like someone had deployed a drag chute behind them. He came to a full stop 50 feet from the opposite shore. When the plane came to a full stop, Jim said, “Congratulations Ron, you did it just as good as I could have. As you can see, there’s damn little margin for error landing on this lake. 50 feet either way and you crash. Now let’s taxi up to the cabin and freak your parents out.”

When they taxied up to the cabin, sure enough Roy and Anne were waiting on the porch. Roy was grinning like a proud Papa when he saw that Ron was flying the plane, and Anne looked white as a sheet. Jim guessed he had succeeded in freaking Anne out at least. When the propeller had stopped, Ron jumped out of the pilot’s seat, closely followed by Jim. “Dad, I landed the plane, and Jim said I was darn near perfect.”

If it were possible for Anne to get any whiter, she managed. She turned and walked inside the house without a comment.

“Roy, this came from you - it’s from Steve at Mac Dill AFB.” Jim handed Roy the envelope, and they all walked inside. Roy put on his reading glasses, opened the letter, and noticed it was on Official Air Force Stationery.

When he noticed that Steve didn’t write the letter, he got real curious, and kept reading.

It read in part:

Dear Roy Williams:

I’m the CO of the Special Operations Joint Command at Mac Dill. I’m Colonel Steve Fellows commanding officer. He has been telling me about the time he spent with you in Alaska. When he got to the part about your son Ron being able to out-shoot all our members of our shooting team I was interested; when he mentioned that he just turned 14, and he was studying to become a Private Pilot, I was incredulous to say the least. Steve assures me that he actually witnessed Ron’s shooting ability, and also said that his mother Anne, Steve’s sister, makes Ron look like a Rookie.

I’ve attached orders for your entire family, including your dog Lucky to fly from Elmendorf AFB in Alaska to MacDill AFB via my personal C-20H Gulfstream IV. I understand that you live in a remote part of Alaska, and that a very good friend of your family is an experienced bush pilot. I’m enclosing a travel voucher good for round-trip travel from your house to Elmendorf AFB via private bush plane, with travel expenses reimbursed by the US Air Force. If Jim wants to come with you to MacDill AFB, we’d love to have him as well. We’ll put you up in VIP quarters for your entire stay. Steve tells me he wants your family to stay at MacDill for 2 weeks. I can guarantee an exciting visit to MacDill with demonstrations of all our capabilities, and of course as much shooting as you want to do. I’ve enclosed orders allowing you to ship civilian weapons aboard a US Air Force Aircraft. Please make sure that everything you ship is in a locked hard gun case. Any ammo you care to bring should be in a locked case as well. We have plenty of Lake City Match ammo for your Browning A-bolt .308 rifles, but if you have some specially loaded rounds you want to bring, feel free.

I look forward to meeting your family next week.

Sincerely,

Gen. Gene Sheppard,
CO MacDill AFB
JSOC

Attachments

Roy's eyes got as big as saucers. This was Steve's doing, but they were neatly trapped, since a 3-star General had invited them, and detailed his personal plane to pick them up. He imagined if they refused to go, the MPs would come get them. Roy showed the letter to Anne, then Ron got to read it.

"Cool Dad, Steve's CO sent his VIP Gulfstream to pick us up. I've never flown in a Jet before. They even said we could bring Lucky. The departure date from Elmendorf is next week. I need to get practicing."

Anne wasn't as enthusiastic as Ron was, but could tell her brother had neatly trapped them. She said, "I guess this means we better get started packing." Then she turned to Jim.

"When I saw Ron getting out of the aircraft, I knew you had let him land here - do you have any idea how dangerous it is to land a small plane on this lake?"

"Anne, I've done it about 100 times by now, between delivering everything Roy ordered after returning from Allakaket, and all the stuff you've ordered since, I could probably do the landing in my sleep. Relax, Ron did land perfectly. He's a very good student, and listens well. Flying is just like any other skill, practice makes perfect. I wouldn't have let him try it unless I was sure he could do it. He's already made several landings at Allakaket, and taken off from here and Allakaket. He's so good right now that if he were 16, he'd have his private pilot's license. He's way better at this than I was for almost the first 10 years. I'm normally a white-knuckle instructor, but I trust Ron. He is like his namesake, he's real cocky and confident, but at the same time, he has shown a serious aversion to doing anything stupid or dangerous. His time on the Microsoft Flight Simulator just might have saved both our lives when he got into that hairy stall situation, yet he didn't panic and he knew to roll the plane all the way over instead of fighting the roll. You can't teach someone that - they either know it or they don't. Face it Anne, Flying's dangerous, and Ron is good at it. He's not a little boy anymore, and will grow up with or without your support. If you support him, he can be the best pilot I know. If you don't support him, he might get fearful, and a fearful pilot is a deadly pilot. I'm thinking of going with you guys to MacDill. It will be neat to see Steve, and it sounds like fun."

"Fun you say, my brother has every intention of stealing my baby away from me."

"Whoa - hold on there Anne - Ron is NOT a baby - he's 14, and in 4 years he'll be gone from here regardless of what you do - you can either support him, or loose him. It's your call. I'm his grandpa, remember - I don't want anything bad to happen to him either, but he has to grow up and leave the nest sometime. At least this way he'll have someplace to go, and they will train him to the limits of his capabilities. He'll love his time in the Air Force, even if he spends his entire career on the shooting team. I know what you're upset about,

you think he'll become a Fighter Pilot, and get killed in some foreign country. Sorry Anne, but that might happen, and unless you wish to keep him locked in his room, you don't have much that you can do to stop him from following his heart and his destiny."

"Thanks, Jim - you're right, I have been too overprotective. It's just these flying lessons made me think of my older brother. I don't want my son to die in a plane crash too."

"Unfortunately Anne, everyone dies. The question is do you want him to die doing something he loves, or die in a miserable dead-end but safe job."

"OK Jim, you made your point - I'm sorry."

"Just try to be supportive, and don't worry about his future. It's in God's hands anyway."

"You're right Jim. I get in trouble whenever I forget that God is in control of everything that happens to us. We can just screw up things up by being disobedient. Yet, in the end, even with our disobedience, the setback is temporary. His grand plan has already succeeded."

"Exactly, God already has a plan for Ron's life, and nothing you can do will change that."

Ron walked in, "Mom, can we go shooting? I want to make sure that my skills are still top-notch."

"Sure son, why don't you get everything out, then you and Grandpa Jim can roll the targets out while I talk to your dad."

Ron hurried to get everything out on the porch, and Jim helped him roll some logs out to the 200, 300, and 400-yard lines. When they were alone, Anne held Roy and cried briefly, then they prayed together for divine guidance, and they suddenly felt better, as if they knew that everything was going according to God's divine plan. Anne dried her eyes, and went out on the porch to join everyone shooting. Ron was already prone, so they put their earmuffs and shooting glasses on, then gave Jim the OK, who gave Ron a thumbs up. Ron settled into a military prone position, and his concentration was such that when the rifle went off, he was surprised by the sudden noise, but didn't flinch. He was shooting at the 400-yard target, and his first round was dead center. He put 2 other rounds within an inch of the shot in the center, then got up and handed the rifle to his Mom. It may have been the fact that she was emotionally upset, or that she was over 40, but Ron finally shot a group smaller than her's. Her groups were still small enough to beat out 2/3 of the National High Power shooters at Camp Perry. Ron's group, on the other hand, was small enough to win the National High Power competition at Camp Perry, and he was still just 14 years old. Jim just shook his head. He could never imagine shooting 3 rounds into a little over an inch at 400 yards. If Ron could still shoot like that at 17, the Air Force would be winning the Camp Perry Nationals for years to come.

Chapter 61 - In the Wild Blue Yonder

Next week Jim showed up at first light with his de Havilland Otter. The big old radial engine plane looked just like the one in the Alaska Tourism Commercial. As Jim taxied up to the door, Roy, Anne and Ron were ready to go. All their guns were cased in locking hard cases just like the letter had requested, and their ammo was in locked ammo cans. Roy made sure no one was carrying anything that Security could complain about, and then they headed out to the plane. Jim, Ron and Roy handled the baggage, then Jim got in the pilot's seat, and Ron got into what would have been the co-pilot seat if the plane had dual controls, which it didn't. Roy and Anne piled in the back seat with Lucky between them.

Jim went through the entire pre-flight sequence for Ron's benefit, who was watching him like a hawk. The pre-flight sequence was different for the elderly plane, and Ron had several questions that Jim answered. When the engine was warmed up and idling smoothly, Jim decided to make everyone bust out laughing "Welcome to Jim Airlines, We'll be flying at 2,000 feet to Anchorage Alaska with a stop at Allakaket. Please no smoking during the flight per FAA regulations. Please remain seated with your seatbelts on. Pilot to co-pilot, prepare for take-off."

Jim revved the throttle, and stood on the right brake pedal, turning the plane around so it faced the lake, then taxied out to the lake. Since the Otter was a purpose built Amphibian, Jim was able to taxi much faster than the Cessna that he and Ron were flying for his lessons. Several minutes later, they made it to the lake, and entered the water with less splash than the Cessna made. While they were taxiing, Jim told Ron the take-off speeds and everything else he needed to fly the plane. The take-off speed for the big plane was higher than the Cessna, but it also accelerated faster due to the huge radial engine. He actually had a higher margin for error with the huge de Havilland plane than they did with the Cessna. Jim water taxied to the downwind end of the lake, and turned to face into the wind. He talked Ron through the take-off procedure, which was different from the Cessna. The plane required less flaps, but more rudder due to the bigger motor's higher torque. Jim set the plane up for take-off, and Ron was glued to the instruments. When he was ready, Jim pulled the throttle all the way out to FULL and they were off. With more than half the lake left, Jim reached take-off speed, and eased the yoke back a few inches. Jim explained that with the huge engine, the plane climbed at 3 times the rate of the Cessna, so they didn't need to practically haul the yoke into your lap. Once the airspeed indicator read 85 knots, Jim retracted the flaps, and pushed the throttle back to the cruise setting, and continued to climb to 2,000 feet. An hour later, Allakaket came into view, and Jim called the tower. Jim landed the plane without a jolt, and taxied up to the fuel depot. While they were refueling the plane and checking the fluids, they got out and stretched. Lucky decided this would be a good time to water some trees, so Ron took him for a walk. Roy, Anne and Jim were talking while the plane was being refueled. Anne said to Jim "You were right about Ron, he's fearless in a plane. He was spending so much time watching you fly, I doubt he saw anything outside of

the plane. I'm still a bit of a white-knuckle flyer, and I know Roy is, but you two seem at home in the air. I'm sorry I gave you so much grief last week."

"Don't worry about it Anne, I'm sorry I was so hard on you last week. I thought you were being overprotective to the point of stifling Ron. It seems you've calmed down since then."

"Not exactly Jim, We just reminded ourselves that Ron's future is in God's hands. We've raised him right, and done everything in our power to help him learn to use his God-given talents. It's up to him and God from here on out, we just need to stay out of the way and be supportive."

"Glad you two feel that way, because I'm sure when the two weeks are up, Ron's going to decide to go to the Air Force Academy as soon as he can. That's all he talks about when we're together, except flying."

"I kind of figured that - my brother could sell air conditioners to Eskimos. We're just going to have fun and enjoy ourselves since this will probably be the last vacation we have as a family."

Ron brought Lucky back right as the mechanic pronounced the plane good to go. Ron handed the leash to Anne, and did the walk-around with Jim. Jim pointed out everything that needed checking on the plane, and they both checked it out, including all the fluids and access covers. When they were done, Jim got in the pilot's seat, and Ron jumped into the front passenger seat. After they were all secured, Jim called the tower and got permission for take-off. He intended to fly directly to Elmendorf and land there. They taxied and took off without incident, and as soon as they were within radio range of Elmendorf AFB, Jim contacted the tower and got permission to land - seems they were expecting him, and had cleared the area of military aircraft that might cause turbulence or jet wash.

An hour later, Jim made his approach radio call. The tower told him they had priority clearance for runway 27L for a straight in approach. Jim thought they were really getting the VIP treatment, because the clearance they gave them was right below a declared emergency clearance. As he entered the pattern, Jim turned to enter the downwind leg of his final approach, which gave Ron a view of the huge base. The runways were over 3 miles long, and wider than their lake. Jim identified 27L, and turned on final, then called the tower and told them they were on final. 1 minute later, they were down on the runway. Jim kept his speed up since he knew he needed to taxi over a mile to where their plane was waiting for them. The tower told him to turn left to taxiway 315, and follow the "follow me" truck to their parking spot on the VIP apron. Sure enough, when they reached the end of the runway, he saw a truck with the Follow me lights lit, and he followed it to a remote corner of the base. A man with lighted batons directed them to a parking spot, and as soon as the propeller stopped, they were met by an airman who would be responsible for securing their aircraft and loading their baggage on the VIP plane.

The Gulfstream IV C-20H was parked in the adjacent parking spot, and the crew already had the air stairs down and were loading the aircraft. They walked over to the plane, and another airman saluted them. Roy handed him the General's letter, and they all presented their IDs to the airman, who checked them off his list. Once he had verified their identity, they were escorted aboard the luxuriously appointed aircraft. They would be flying in style. All the seats would have made the average first class seats on the most expensive airline look like tourist class seats. The carpeting was over an inch thick, and the plane was so well insulated that they could barely hear the Rolls Royce turbofan engines spool up. As the air stairs closed, the pilot came on the intercom, and advised them to buckle their safety belts, and return their seats to the upright and locked position for take-off. The crew chief walked back into the seating area, and made sure they were secured. Even Lucky had his own seat, but would probably return to the floor when it was safe. Ron put the belt around Lucky as best as possible, and he sat there and looked at Ron like "What are you doing?" When they were all secured, he walked forward to tell the pilot they were all secure. Ron looked out his small window at the huge Rolls Royce engines and marveled at the huge amount of power he knew they put out. With 2 engines, this plane could cruise at 450 knots and had an unrefueled range of 4800 miles. They could easily make it to Florida without stopping to refuel.

As the plane taxied, Jim turned to Ron and said that they were in for a real treat, since these C-20H Gulfstreams had almost fighter-like performance, and he would feel the g's as the pilot accelerated for take-off. Finally the plane turned down the runway, and plane stopped taxiing. 1 minute later, Ron felt a kick in the small of his back as the pilot shoved the throttles to take-off, and they accelerated rapidly down the runway. Jim thought the pilot was showing off when halfway down the runway, the plane took a 30 degree nose-up attitude and accelerated. 5 minutes later, they were at their assigned altitude of 30,000 feet. Five minutes later, the pilot announced that it was OK to take off their seatbelts. 2 minutes later, the crew chief came back and talked to Roy then Ron. He told Ron that the pilot had asked if he wanted to come forward into the cockpit. Looking back to his dad, who was nodding his approval, Ron unlocked his seatbelt and followed the crew chief forward. The crew chief opened the cockpit door, and Ron noticed the co-pilot's seat was vacant, and the crew chief was directing him into it.

Ron sat down, and the chief buckled him in, and handed him the headset, and showed him how to work it. As soon as he was situated, he heard the pilot's voice in his headset.

"Mr. Williams, welcome to Air Force Flight 1534. Your uncle informed us you were studying to be a private pilot, and thought you'd like to ride in the right seat for a while."

Ron looked over and noticed the pilot had Captain's bars on his shoulder.

"Thanks Captain, Steve was definitely right - I would love it. This plane takes off much faster than the Cessna 172 Amphibian I fly."

“I started in a 172 as well, but mine had wheels. Did I understand your uncle correctly, you’re only 14.”

“Yes sir, I just turned 14. My “grandpa” Jim back there is my IP. I’ve already done 4 waterborne landings and take-offs since I started flying lessons a couple of months ago.”

“YOU’VE ALREADY DONE WATERBORNE TAKE-OFFS AND LANDINGS?”

“Yes sir, not only that, but the lake I landed on was no longer than your runway was wide, and the approach is really steep because of a 200 foot treeline 300 feet before touchdown.”

“Holy Cow. I thought it was tough to land at the municipal airport I landed on.”

“I had a little help, my parents bought the Microsoft Flight Simulator for me, and I practiced landing on a lake that was even smaller than that until I got it right. I had about a dozen serious crack-ups on the simulator until I figured out you needed to float in at full flaps just above stall, then hold it all the way down to the water without touching anything, or you’d either stall or overshoot. On this lake, an overshoot meant a crash, because the downwind end of the lake had the same 200 foot obstruction.”

“Holy Cow, when we land this plane, I need to shake your IP’s hand - it takes real guts to let a student land a plane on a lake that small.”

Their conversation switched to the Gulfstream they were flying, as the pilot explained the controls and instruments. When he finished, he asked Ron to put his hands and feet on the controls and get the feel for the controls. After about 10 minutes, the Captain told Ron “Co-pilot’s plane” and took his hands and feet off. Ron was flying the plane. Ron flew for almost a half-hour before the pilot called “Pilot’s plane” and put his hands and feet back on the controls. After he made a few radio calls, he turned his attention to Ron.

“Son that was the smoothest I’ve ever seen a student pilot fly. Any ideas what you want to do when you get Older?”

“Well my uncle Steve thinks I might be able to make the Air Force shooting team, but I might want to fly too.”

“Well if you decide to fly, may I make a suggestion?”

“Sure Captain.”

“Try to get the F-15 Strike Eagle. It’s one heck of a plane, and they get to do more stuff. F-16’s are nice, but they really haven’t done anything with them for years. It’s not like Russia

is planning to attack us anytime soon, but we will always need multi-role aircraft that can fight, bomb and do most of the other assignments.”

“Yes Sir. Those were my sentiments as well.”

OK Ron, you need to return to your seat, we’ll be landing in a couple of hours, and we need to get some stuff done up here first.” The Captain stuck out his hand, and Ron shook his hand. ”Well Done Son - We’ll see you on your return trip and maybe you can get in some more flying.”

“Thanks Captain, I really enjoyed it.”

The crew chief escorted Ron back to his seat, and Ron strapped himself in. Bubbling with excitement, he turned to Jim. “Guess What - they let me fly the plane.”

Jim’s eyes got as big as saucers, then realized that the pilot’s hands and feet were no more than a fraction of a second from the controls, and they were flying straight and level.

“Well at least you didn’t do any aerobatics this time.”

“Not a good idea with passengers aboard.”

“You’re learning Ron. OK, why don’t you rest for the remainder of the flight - I’m sure you have a busy day ahead of you if I know your Uncle.”

Ron leaned back in his chair, and was soon dozing. He was dreaming of flying as he usually did. He didn’t wake up until the pilot announced they were landing at MacDill AFB.

Chapter 62 - Reunions

Once the plane landed and taxied to where Steve's Hummer waited, the pilot shut down the engines and an airman chocked the wheels. The crew chief opened the air stairs as soon as the engines had spooled down. The first one out was Ron with Lucky on his leash. Steve was waiting in his dress blues so Ron ran up to him and gave Steve a big hug. "Thanks for getting us here - they let me fly the plane."

"Cool. I hope you didn't try any aerobatics?"

"Not likely with passengers. All we did was fly straight and level. The weirdest thing was there was virtually no noise in the cabin. With the Cessna, the prop noise made it difficult to talk in the cockpit. The pilot was really nice, and answered all my questions, and offered to let me fly on the way back."

By then Roy and Anne had made their way out of the plane, and Anne gave her brother a big hug, and Roy shook his hand. Jim was the last off the plane, and he shook Steve's hand.

"I'm glad you all made it. The crew will unload your gear and meet us over at the VIP housing section. Let's get you settled, then I'll fill you in on what we've got planned for the next two weeks."

With that they boarded the Hummers that were parked there, and they followed Steve to Base Housing. They turned a corner, and the décor changed from GI grey to The Plaza Hotel. The VIP accommodations would rival any 4-star hotel in the USA. They were quickly shown to their rooms - actually a group of adjoining suites. Anne and Roy had their own room, Ron had his own, and Jim had his own, with a common living room with all the amenities. Steve told them the Restaurant was open 24/7 and all the food and anything else they wanted was free, and they weren't even to tip, since the help was all military. Since none of them drank, the liquor cabinets weren't stocked, but the refrigerators were full of soft drinks, water, creamer and iced tea. There was a 12-cup coffee maker and 4 large coffee mugs on the counter. There was an assortment of bagged teas and gourmet coffees on the counter. Steve asked if everything was OK, and Ron asked about Lucky. Steve walked them into Ron's room, and right next to his bed was a cedar doggie bed for Lucky, with bowls of food and water. Ron noticed a bag of dog food that was the same brand that Lucky ate in Alaska - they thought of everything. "Thanks Steve."

They walked back out to the living room, and Steve pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket, and set it on the table. They all sat down to review their itinerary. Judging by the length of the list, they were going to have a busy couple of weeks. The events included demonstrations by the various commands on base, including the Pave Hawks, Rangers, SEALs, Recon Marines and a couple of others. There was also plenty of shooting time

included, and some down time. Roy was glad of that, because he didn't think he could make it through the day without taking a nap anymore. Since it was late in the afternoon, they didn't schedule anything for that day, so Steve used the time to catch up. The conversation revolved around Ron's flying lessons and shooting, like Anne had predicted. Steve's chin hit his chest when Jim told him about the stall incident, and Ron landing on their tiny little lake. Steve was impressed, his nephew was only 14, yet it looked like he had nerves of steel. Later, they walked down to the restaurant. They all ordered huge Ribeye steaks since beef was in short supply in Alaska. They arrived 15 minutes later, cooked to order, with all the trimmings. Steve ordered a bottle of Merlot and 4 glasses. Ron had a glass of Pepsi.

After dinner, they headed back up to their room and talked until about 2200. Steve said they needed to get some sleep, they needed to be up by 0900 for breakfast since they had a busy day ahead of them tomorrow. Everyone said goodnight, and headed off to their rooms for a shower and sleep. Ron took Lucky out to do his business in a clearly marked "Doggie Depository" at least that's what the sign said - evidently some airman's idea of humor. When Lucky was finished they went back up to their room and Lucky laid down while Ron figured out how to work the shower. After turning nearly every knob on the wall, Ron got the water the temperature he liked it, and got it coming out of the shower head instead of the tub faucet. The shower massage feature was something entirely new, but he got it figured out. There was a TV in his room, but Ron didn't know how to use it, so it never occurred to him to turn it on. If he had, he would have realized he was in the "kiddie room" and the TV had a blocker on all PPV and movie channels. Ron was too tired to care, and laid down as was soon fast asleep.

The next morning, they were all up way before 0900, so they got dressed and went down for breakfast. Luckily for them, the restaurant was open 24/7, so they already had a breakfast buffet all ready, and all they had to do was take a tray and pick out what they wanted. There were a lot of foods Ron didn't recognize, but smelled terrific, like cinnamon rolls - so he took one of everything that looked or smelled good. Most of the time his taste agreed with his smell, but he took one bite of the papaya and put the rest back down. He didn't like the taste or texture. Luckily for them, the buffet was heavy on eggs, pancakes, bacon and sausage, so they loaded up with the familiar foods. The kitchen manager just shook his head - they all had appetites like Marines.

When they got back from breakfast, Steve asked Ron if he wanted to join them for PT. Not realizing that Steve would continue their habit of early morning PT, Ron had stuffed himself, so he had to beg off. He told Steve he had eaten too much, but he would make sure to join them tomorrow. Steve jogged down to the elevator, and joined his company out front of the hotel, and did their PT while Ron watched from the window. He wished he could join them, but puking his guts out on the first day wouldn't leave a good impression. Steve came back an hour later and drove them to their first demonstration. The SEALs had arranged a little surprise for them. When they got to the field, they were seated in bleachers, and as a C-130 buzzed overhead, Steve told them to look up and keep looking up. The SEALs jumped

from the rear ramp of the C-130 trailing smoke streamers. 4 of them popped chutes almost immediately, and one of the smoke trails continued down and down until Anne was sure that the SEAL was going to go SPLAT, when at the last second, he pulled his ripcord, and the chute blossomed 2 seconds before he hit the ground. When the team had landed, they walked over and introduced themselves, and explained the guy who almost went Splat as Anne had said was demonstrating the HALO or High Altitude Low Opening technique. Their CO joked that it also meant what you got if you opened too low. The rest of the team was demonstrating the HAHO or High Altitude High Opening technique. With their square chutes, they could cover miles of territory under chute and land far away from the flight path of the C-130. They could jump from up to 30,000 feet from a C-5 Galaxy with oxygen if they needed to. Ron looked up at Steve, and noticed he had the same ice cream cone shaped pin as the SEAL CO. He asked Steve what the badge was for. "It means we are Airborne Qualified - I've jumped out of a perfectly good plane."

Jim was going to say something, but decided against it - he didn't want to spend the rest of his vacation in the Brig.

Ron asked Steve if he ever did a HALO "Not on purpose."

They all started laughing.

When they were finished with the SEAL demonstration, Steve asked Ron if he'd like to shoot on their thousand yard range. Ron's eyes lit up and he asked Steve if he could start on the 400 yard line and work his way out. Steve explained that the range could be set up for anything from 100 yard targets to 1,000 yard targets, there were target pits and berms every 100 yards from 100 - 1,000 yards. Ron got really excited, and said "Sure - I've wanted to see how far I can hit the target at."

Steve drove them over to the range, and their cased Browning A-bolts were with the Range master just as they had left them in Alaska. They each took 200 rounds of Lake City .308 match ammo from the Range master, and proceeded out to the shooting positions. Steve explained that the range master had already setup the 400 yard targets on lanes 10 and 11, so Ron walked out to lane 11, set up his rifle and his shooting pad, and laid prone. He picked up his rifle, and looking through the sight with the bolt open and the magazine empty, visualized the mirage to determine wind velocity and direction. When he had the wind doped, he asked for a trial shot, since he figured he was shooting for score, to confirm his estimate of wind direction. Steve told him OK, and everyone put on their earmuffs and shooting glasses. When they were all set, Steve gave Ron the thumbs up, and the Range master put up the red flag signifying that a range was now hot. Ron loaded a single round in the magazine, and checked his position. He was comfortable, and the scope was centered on the bullseye. He reached over and closed the action, and released the safety, then took a firing grip on the gun, and centered the scope on the bullseye while he took several deep breaths. He blew out half the third breath, and squeezed the trigger as he held his breath.

The trigger broke almost as a surprise, and Ron checked his shot through the scope. It was in the 10-ring, slightly low and left of the bullseye. He made the corrections on the scope, and loaded 4 more rounds. Since the range was still hot, he didn't need to ask for permission. As the scope steadied on the bullseye, Ron squeezed the trigger, and was rewarded with a bullseye. Cycling the bolt, Ron fed another round into the chamber, and fired when the crosshairs were exactly in the last position. He proceeded to put the last 2 rounds right in the bullseye as well. Ron set the gun down to cool, and Steve said they would bring the target to him to measure the group. Ron already knew all 4 rounds were in the bullseye, but he wanted to check his group size. The range master brought him his target, and sure enough, all 4 rounds were in the bullseye. Ron took his dial indicator calipers and measured the outside of the 2 furthest rounds at 1.4 inches. Ron subtracted the diameter of the round (.308) his actual group size was 1.092 inches. For all intents and purposes, he had just shot a 1 inch group at 400 yards. 5 minutes later, a Hummer with flags and antennas on it drove up to the range, and everybody wearing a uniform saluted. Ron thought this must be Steve's CO. When he got close, Steve introduced him as General Gene Shepard.

Ron felt like saluting, but knew it would be improper, so he stood there at his best attempt at attention. General Shepard stuck out his hand, and Ron shook it.

"Steve's been telling me a lot about you Ron, mind if I see your target?"

"Here it is Sir. The first shot was a trial shot to verify the wind. As you can see, the rest of the rounds are inside the bullseye. I measured the group, and the gross measure was 1.4 inches, subtracting the bullet diameter gave me a true group size of 1.092 inches."

"Ron how far were you shooting?"

"400 yards sir."

General Shepard stared hard at Ron, then at Steve - evidently they weren't putting him on.

"Son, could you do me a favor and shoot a group for me at 600 yards?"

"I would be honored sir - by now the rifle should have cooled enough to give me a good accurate group."

Ron walked over to his rifle, and the General joined the group behind the shooting line. Ron's pulse was racing, but he knew how to slow it, he started reciting the 23rd Psalm. As he recited in his mind, his mind cleared, and he could concentrate on the task at hand. A target was already set up at the 600 yard line. Ron looked at his ballistic table, and reset the elevation knob the required number of clicks for that round at 600 yards. He added a couple of clicks of windage from the table as well. When he had the scope set, he laid on his

shooting pad, got into a good prone position, loaded the magazine with 4 rounds, and closed the action. Looking through his scope, he sighted the 600 yard target, and decided to increase the magnification of the scope. He dialed it up until he could see the bullseye clearly, and focused until the crosshairs were in sharp focus and the target was too. Then he started his deep breathing technique to further slow his breathing and slow his pulse. Once he was in the zone again, he took 3 deep breaths, blew out half the third one, and held it. As the scope settled on the bullseye, he squeezed the trigger. He checked his shot, and could clearly see a hole in the center of the bullseye. That's when he knew he had doped the wind and drop properly. After that it was just a matter of putting the 3 other rounds into the same hole, which Ron did. When the range master brought the target, General Shepard was amazed that all 4 rounds were in a tiny cluster in the center of the bullseye. Ron took out his calipers, and measured the group at 2.4 inches from edge to edge. He then subtracted the bullet diameter to give his exact group size which was 2.092. When the General saw that number, he almost fainted. He knew that his best snipers were shooting 2 inch groups at 600 yards, and his best shooter on the team could shoot a 1.98 group at 600 yards prone.

"Son where did you learn to Shoot?"

"From my mom sir."

Roy introduced Anne to General Shepard.

"Mam, I can't tell you how impressed I am with your son's shooting ability. He's already out-shot half the shooting team, and shoots as good as my best snipers at 600 yards."

"General, My other brother Ron was a Sniper in the Army. When he came back from Vietnam I was still a kid. He lived with us for the rest of his life, and basically raised Steve and I. During he summers, he spent all of our time when we weren't doing chores either fishing, hunting or shooting. 15 years ago when I met Roy in Allakaket, I could shoot groups like my son, but I'm getting older, because I can't shoot less than 1.75 inches at 400 yards prone."

"Ma'am, that is amazing, where is this other brother?"

Anne almost started crying when Steve whispered in his ear that Ron died in the same plane crash that stranded Roy in Alaska.

"Ma'am, I am so sorry - I didn't know. It seems Ron inherited your brother's shooting ability. Son, if you want to, when you are old enough, I'd like you to enroll in the Air Force Academy on a full scholarship. We want you on our Shooting team. How are you doing in school?"

"General, I've already passed my Alaska GED test, and I'm studying for my APT. I took

the PSAT at 13, and my scores put me in the top 10%. As soon as I turn 16, I intend to take the SAT and the ACT since I was home schooled and therefore have no certified GPA.”

“Let me get this straight, at 13 you passed your Alaska GED test, and yet you continued to study for your APT?”

“Yes sir, I knew my parents couldn’t afford 4 years of college, so I wanted to take the Advanced Placement Test and get my Math, English, and Science lower division units out of the way.”

“Son, what level of math are you currently studying?”

Anne spoke up “He’s currently studying second year Calculus - College Level.”

“You aren’t kidding me are you?”

“No Sir - I would never kid a General - Ron told me never to kid an officer higher than Major.”

General Shepard had to laugh at that one.

“Son, it sounds like as soon as you are old enough, you should apply to the Air Force Academy. I’ll personally write a letter of endorsement, and send a copy to your State Senator.”

The General walked away shaking his head in amazement.

“Did you hear that Dad, I’m going to the Air Force Academy.”

Chapter 63 - Thrill Ride

The next day, Steve had a real treat scheduled for Ron. Anne and Roy opted out, but Jim's curiosity got the better of him. They were driven out to the runway, where this huge helicopter was waiting for them with its Rotor turning. Steve told Ron and Jim that once they got out of the Hummer, they were supposed to walk bent over at the waist, and not stand up until they were inside the chopper. The huge chopper turned out to be a Pave Hawk, one of the most specialized helicopters in the US inventory. Its designation was the MH-60G Pave Hawk, and there were only 10 in the entire US inventory. It was armed with 2 7.62mm GE miniguns, flew nap of the earth at 180 mph, and had the avionics to do that day or night, in fair weather or foul. Its rotor was almost 55 feet in diameter, and had 2 huge GE turboshaft engines. On the ground it looked like a giant green/black insect. Ron couldn't wait to get aboard, and the crew chief helped him strap in. The pilot and Steve had made special considerations, and had strapped Ron into what was usually the Crew Chief's seat so he would have an unobstructed view of the cockpit and out the windows. They put a headset on, mostly to keep out the noise.

Ron could hear the Pilots talking to the tower, then heard the tower give them permission to take off. The engine noise doubled, and the MH-60G leaped into the air, assumed a nose-down position, and charged toward the training area. As soon as they were inside their training area, they called for permission to engage nap of the earth. They dropped like a rock, and Ron knew they were going to crash. The pilot pulled the nose up just in time, and they were flying at 100mph no more than 50 feet off the deck. They flew between trees, and along riverbanks. Ron thought this was outstanding, and Jim was glad he didn't eat a big breakfast. Half an hour later, they landed for a moment, picked up a squad of SEALs, and the next phase of the demonstration began. They demonstrated exiting the aircraft rapidly over water, falling 15-20 feet to the water while the chopper maintained 30 knots forward air speed. Once they had gotten out of the chopper, the pilot turned back around, and hovered with the deck right above the water, and picked them up again, and hooked their ropes into the central connection. The pilot flew to a nearby rooftop, and they fast-rope down to the roof. The crew chief disconnected the ropes, and they flew back to the base flying nap of the earth. Jim enjoyed this a little more than the way in because he knew it would soon be over.

When they landed at the airbase, Steve had another surprise for them. They picked up Roy and Anne, and drove over to the Ranger's compound. Steve explained they had their own compound because they couldn't play well with the other children. Jim started laughing his head off, remembering all the Marine jokes he had ever heard. They were met by the Ranger's CO, and followed his Hummer to the training area. Steve explained they were going to get to do some live fire training. Ron was excited, Roy and Anne were a little apprehensive. When they got there, a Gunnery Sergeant started giving them weapons familiarization training with the M-16A2/203 combination, the M249 SAW, the M9 Beretta, and the H&K MP-5/10SD. Ron's eyes got big when he saw the MP-5/10SD, firing a Ruger

22/45 with a suppressor was one thing, but he had read about the SEALs and Secret Service with the H&K subguns. While most of the H&K subguns in the inventory were the ubiquitous MP-5, the Secret Service and Special Forces had both placed orders for the 10mm version for the extra stopping power of the 10mm cartridge. They came with a suppressor mount, hence the MP-5/10SD for suppressed.

As soon as he was finished with the training, Ron volunteered to go first. The gunny picked up the M16A2 and handed it to Ron, but waited until he had his ears and eyes on. They had a 100 yard target set up, and talked Ron through firing the M-16 from the standing position. He told Ron the gun was battle-sighted so it should hit in the black. He handed Ron a 20 round magazine, and stepped back. Ron looked around to make sure the range was clear, noted the red flag indicating a hot range, slid the magazine into the well, pulled back on the charging handle, and cleared the safety. He took an aggressive stance, brought the rifle up to the ready position, and found the front sight in the center of the peep sight. He fired a single round, and noticed it was low and right. He put the safety on, and received permission from the Gunny to adjust the sights, and dialed 1 MOA of up and left, pointed the rifle down range again, and cleared the safety, then sighted the target through the peep sight. He squeezed the trigger, and was rewarded with a round through the bullseye. The Gunny was impressed. Ron proceeded to put the rest of the magazine through the bullseye. When the action locked open, he safed the gun, and the gunny sent a runner to pull the target. There was 1 round outside the x-ring, and 19 inside.

The Gunny asked Ron if he's like to try again at 200 yards and handed Ron a magazine, while a runner set up a 200 yard target. Ron adjusted the sight accordingly, then when the range was clear and hot, he loaded the rifle and cycled the action. He took the same stance, and proceeded to put all 20 rounds in the X-ring. When the runner brought the target back, the Gunny's chin nearly hit his chest. All 20 rounds were in the X-ring. The Gunny decided to ask Ron to try prone at 300 yards, and set up a target. When the range was clear he handed Ron a magazine. Meanwhile, Ron had adjusted the elevation again, then got into a good Military Prone position, cycled the action, and concentrated this time. It took him a little longer, but all 20 rounds were in the X-ring again. The Gunny thought he had been set up until Steve told him Ron's story. The Gunny was green with envy, since the Army had a Shooting team too.

The Gunny asked Ron if he'd like to fire the M-203 grenade launcher. After showing him how to use the grenade launcher, he pointed out a target about 200 meters away handed him a M781 Blue practice round, and stood back. Ron flipped up the ladder sight, set it for 200 meters, pulled the barrel forward, inserted the round, and closed the breech. He took a standard standing stance, and lined the ladder sight up with the tip of the front sight to get elevation, and pointed the barrel right at the target, then squeezed the trigger of the M-203. There was a loud BLOOP, and a big puff of smoke a second later right in front of the target. Talk about beginner's luck. He landed the round within 10 meters of the target on the first try. Since Ron wasn't in the military yet, he couldn't shoot any high explosive rounds. The

Gunny wanted to see how Ron would do with the MP-5/10 anyway. They moved over to the pistol range for the next part.

The pistol range was right next door (at least in Military thinking) since it was only 100 yards away. Ron ended up falling back to help his dad, who was visibly tiring. Ron was confused, just two years ago, he was moving like a 40-year old, now he was barely getting around. He was tempted to ask a Medic to check him out, but didn't want to embarrass his dad. Besides, it didn't seem his heartbeat was any faster, at least that he could tell from where he was. Maybe it was just arthritis. Ron decided to mention it to Anne later. They arrived at the pistol range, and Roy was grateful to sit down again.

The Gunny showed Ron the course. It was a highly modified Hogan's alley, with pop-ups, sliders and reactive targets. The rules of the game were to engage targets before the "You're Dead" buzzer sounded. The Gunny told him there would be NO targets past 9:00 on his left and 3:00 on his right for safety reasons, and no targets higher than 6 feet above ground level, since they weren't equipped with 60 foot backstops. Ron laughed and told him not to worry. The Gunny told Ron that his gun had been modified NOT to fire full auto, his choices were either a 3-round burst or semiauto, He highly advised the first pass through at semiauto, then he could flip to burst mode the second time through if he wanted. Ron shot a quick glance at Roy. His color looked better. Maybe the heat and humidity were getting to him.

Ron looked back at the Gunny who was asking if he were ready, then indicated he wouldn't need his hearing protection. Smiling, Ron took his earmuffs off. This could be fun. The Gunny asked him a second time if he were ready, and handed him a loaded mag. Ron yelled "YES SIR." and locked and loaded, then cleared the safety, making sure he threw the safety switch the right way to semiauto. The Gunny said just one word "Proceed" and Ron stepped onto the range, scanning left and right, his senses on high alert. He sensed movement to his right, and almost fired when he realized this was also a "shoot/don't shoot" range, and the target was a "don't shoot" mom with a kid. Ron eased up on the trigger, then caught something in his peripheral vision. Scanning right, he ID'd the target as a "Raghead Terrorist" and a definite shoot. He fired a single snap shot through the forehead, and the target went down. Dang this was fun. All of a sudden, two targets popped up on opposite sides of the range. He almost froze, then unlocked, and ID's the targets as "shooters" and put one quick round each through the 10-ring. This was just like shooting bears, except you got to shoot all the bears, and didn't have to worry about "don't shoot" targets.

Ron didn't have time to gloat, because 2 more targets popped up, one behind cover, and the other a mover. The pop-up was closer, so he engaged it first. His first round hit the cover, but he corrected that problem, and the second round took him out. He turned to engage the mover, and it was almost behind cover, which meant the "You're Dead" buzzer would sound. He swung the muzzle over the target, and got off a lucky shot right before the kill zone disappeared behind the barrier. He was still alive, but barely. Not seeing any more targets, he walked slowly down the lane, scanning left and right all the time. He almost

jumped out of his skin when a pop-up jumped up right in front of him. He fired instinctively, and managed to get a good shot off. It wasn't one of his best shots, but it was good enough for the target to go back down. He walked further down the lane, and decided the Gunny must be a sadist when first 3 targets popped up, then two more, then he mixed some more shoot/don't shoot targets into the mix. The final target was President George Bush. Ron almost laughed, thinking how many SEALS might just squeeze off a round if it were Kennedy, Schumer, Fineswine, or Kerry. He moved like a snake, and almost got the entire bunch when the "You're Dead" buzzer sounded. He missed a hidden sniper target at his 10:00 when he was fixated on the GW target. Ron put the safety back on and lowered his weapon. He felt dejected until the Gunny walked up and told him the only shooters to successfully complete that run were Special Forces trained. He did very well for a rookie. Ron asked the Gunny if the last target were Teddy Kennedy or Hillary Clinton, would it be a shoot, or don't shoot target?

The Gunny roared with laughter. It seemed another Gunny with a perverse sense of humor did just that, and drove the Delta operators nuts trying to figure out if it constituted a shoot or don't shoot target. He said they argued back at the Delta club about it for days. Luckily their CO never heard about that stunt, or he would have had kittens.

With the "demonstration" over, the Gunny asked if anyone else wanted to try it. Roy was feeling better, and decided "sure why not" and stood up. The Gunny grabbed a fresh magazine from the pile, reset the range, and handed the MP-10SD to Roy. Since the gun was already loaded, all he did was load the fresh magazine, and take the safety off, making sure it was in Semiauto mode. The Gunny asked if Roy were ready, and he heard a low, more subdued YES. Roy had his game face on, and heard a target actuator to his right. Seemed the Gunny was getting crafty in his old age, and switching the scenario around. Roy managed to 10-ring all of his targets, but didn't go for head shots, he just eliminated the targets. He got 2/3 the way through the scenario when the "You're dead" buzzer sounded. Roy thought a target was dead, but didn't realize his round had missed the kill zone. After 5 seconds, the "You're Dead" buzzer sounded to indicate the target wasn't eliminated, but he was. The Gunny walked up to Roy, and said "Not Bad for a Senior Citizen." Roy had to laugh since the Gunny was maybe 5 years younger than him. The Gunny shook Roy's hand, then escorted him back to the bleachers.

Ron wanted to go again, this time in burst mode. The gunny agreed, and told him that if he fired a burst into each target, he would have to perform a combat reload. Ron said he could handle it, the Gunny shrugged and handed him 3 mags. He handed Ron the gun, and Ron loaded a fresh mag, flipped the safety to burst, and put the other two mags in his right front BDU pocket, just like the Gunny had showed him. He stepped to the line, the Gunny reset the range, then pushed another button that Ron couldn't see, and told Ron to proceed. As soon as he stepped onto the range, targets were popping up left and right - he must have stepped into a Terrorist Convention. He even successfully avoided the "don't shoot" targets, and had made it 3/4 the way through when the "You're dead" buzzer sounded. A mover had

made it under cover without any fatal holes in it. The Gunny stood there amazed. A 14-yr old kid had made it $\frac{3}{4}$ the way through the toughest scenario they had. He called it "High Noon at the Bazaar". Several Rangers had complained the course was unrealistically tough. The SEALs loved it, since they believed the more you sweated in training, the less you bled in battle. The Gunny would have to tell his CO about this kid, maybe they could woo him away from the Air Force.

When they were finished, they gathered for a pow-wow. The Gunny asked Ron what he thought of the M-16/M203 combination. He said that if it weren't for the extra range of the grenade launcher, he wondered why hang all that weight on a "poodle shooter". The Gunny liked this kid. He asked him what they usually shot in Alaska, and he told the Gunny he shot a Browning A-bolt in .308 with a BOSS unit and a Leupold scope. They always carried a double shoulder holster with a Colt Anaconda on one side and a Ruger 22/45 on the other. Gunny could understand the Anaconda - there were big bears in Alaska. He asked Ron why they would carry a suppressed .22 pistol in Alaska. Roy answered for him. "The 22/45 is a foraging gun to kill small game. I've shot a group of 10 rabbits once and none of them knew what hit them. besides, you can shoot all day for practice for only a couple of dollars." The Gunny asked Roy which suppressor they used. He told him "It's the Ares integral suppressor. More than once I've fooled an Airline employee who thought it was a regular bull-barreled 22/45 target model." The Gunny told Roy he liked the Ares 22/45, and Delta wanted to get a bunch for sentry removal, since the noise signature was lower than the suppressed .45s, but some Idiot in the chain of command couldn't pull his head out and vetoed it, saying they had a bunch of suppressed guns already in the inventory. The Gunny switched topics. "You know Ron, I loved the Garand and the M -14. It pissed me off to no end when Gen. LeMay bought all those poodle shooter for his MP's. I mean if he hadn't recruited a bunch of sissies to guard his planes, we would still have the M -14 as our main battle rifle. The Seals love the M -14, and keep a bunch in their inventory, including a few special Sniper grade rifles for their designated Snipers. SEAL snipers are more defensive than offensive, so they like the rate of fire of a semiauto MBR, and had their armorers customize a bunch of M-14's to Sniper weapons that are accurate out 1,000 yards with Lake City match rounds."

They spent the rest of the day firing the weapons. Anne turned out to be pretty good with the M -16 and the MP-5/10 although she didn't try the Hogan's alley. The Gunny asked Ron if he wanted to fire the SAW, and asked Roy if it was OK to go back to the rifle range with him. Roy was too tired to walk back and forth, but they were on a Military base, so he figured Ron was safe. On the way over the Gunny got talking to Ron. "Young Man, you really impressed me with your display of shooting, if I didn't think the Air Force had a lock on you, I'd ask you to consider West Point. I just wanted to tell you that I think you're probably one of the best natural shooters I've seen in my lifetime. Just don't take that gift for granted."

"No Sir Gunny - I won't let it go to my head. Who knows, something might happen

tomorrow, and it would all go away, like if I got hurt in an accident or something. What I really want is an education, what you learn they can never take away from you. Thanks for the offer, but if I went to another academy, Steve would hunt me down and kill me. I really appreciate all you've done for us today, and I had a blast firing the live ammo on your pop-up range. It's kind of like shooting bears back home, except they don't attack you by the dozens."

"You're right Ron, that was unfair, but I wanted to see how you would handle it. Except for 1 mistake, you would have cleared the entire scenario, and would have been the first non-Special Forces trained person to do so. I can tell your parents are very proud of you, but you're mom's scared she's going to lose you. Do both of yourselves a favor, spend as much time with your mom now as you can."

"Thanks Gunny, I'll remember that."

They got to the rifle range, and the Gunny checked the M -249 SAW over carefully, and loaded a box of linked ammo giving him 200 rounds to play with. He had 5 targets set up at ranges from 100-400 yards and had Ron go prone behind the gun. He then coached Ron on the finer points of the SAW, and gave him a scenario to make shooting the 5 targets challenging. First, he was to put a burst into every other target from left to right, then traverse back right to left and engage the ones he missed. If he had any ammo left, he was to shoot a burst into the heads of each target. Ron put his earmuffs and eye protection on, then settled behind the gun and charged it, then released the safety, flipping it to Full Auto. The Gunny had warned him to try and limit his shooting to 3-round bursts. With the rate of fire the SAW was capable of, it would be a neat trick. He thought that if he just tapped the trigger, he should get a short burst out of it. Looking over his right shoulder, he saw the Gunny giving him a thumbs-up, and he settled behind the gun, and aimed at the first target on the left, and when the sight centered on the bullseye, he tapped the trigger, swung the barrel using the bipod to the 3rd target, tapped the trigger, then swung to the fifth target, and tapped the trigger. Then he swung the gun back right to left, and engaged the 4th and 2nd targets. Finally, he aimed at the heads of the targets, and put a burst into each, and noticing he still had ammo left, safed the gun and got up. The Gunny made sure the weapon was safe, removed the ammo belt from the gun, then walked downrange with Ron to check targets. The first target had a string of 5 shots from crotch to neck, the 3rd target had a shorter string through the kill zone, and the 5th target had 4 rounds right in the center of the target, as did the 2nd and the 4th. Every target had a burst of fire obliterating the head of the target. The Gunny just shook his head in amazement, and was wondering when the kid's red cape was coming back from the cleaners. "Kid, you just did something NO trainee has done before. You followed my orders, and hit the targets exactly where I told you to. By the time you hit the 5th target, you figured out trigger and muzzle control. Most trainees need several thousands of rounds to get anywhere near what you just did. Do you have any idea how you did it?"

“You said to just tap the trigger, that’s exactly what I did. I didn’t squeeze it, since I couldn’t let up fast enough to keep from shooting half the belt at over 700 rounds per minute. Also, I didn’t touch the trigger until the sights had settled on the bullseye. A line from Mel Gibson’s movie “The Patriot” sums up what my Mom told me “Aim Small, Miss Small.” I aimed for the bullseye, and I expected to hit it. I wasn’t just trying to put rounds in the black.”

“Well I’ll be damned - I guess all we have to do is tell the recruits to do EXACTLY what we say, and don’t touch the trigger until the sights are on the bullseye. Son, those bullseyes are an inch across, and you say you can see them from 100 yards.”

“Yes sir, the 300 and 400 yard ones are hard, but I can barely make them out.”

“Have you ever had your vision checked?”

“Never, I haven’t seen a doctor yet either. Kind of hard to see a doctor on a regular basis when you live in the middle of the Alaskan bush.”

Gunny just shook his head in amazement - he’d been doing a lot of that today. He wouldn’t have believed this kid if he hadn’t seen it with his own eyes. Even after seeing it, he still had troubles believing it. This kid made all the famous shooters he had grown up idolizing look like amateurs.